Silent Scream!

Nosferatu, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Metropolis, and Edison's Frankenstein–Four Novels.

C. Augustine

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Silent Scream: ***Nosferatu*****,** ***The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,*** ***Metropolis,*** **and** ***Edison's Frankenstein*****—Four Novels.**

By C. Augustine

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“The camera is the demon’s eye.”
— F.W. Murnau

“Each of us is a walking corpse. The only thing yet to be decided is the hour of our funeral.”
— Fritz Lang

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Foreword

It is considered *de rigueur* for an author to preface his work with some justification. Alas, I can give none better than obsession.

The adaptations of the films which follow in this slim book were each written out of a necessity to capture a ghost—a spook; to resurrect the spirit of an age that thrilled to horrors and wonders as subtly dark as Caligari's cloak. To wring its neck with his bony, gloved hands. To drain from it, as Count Graf Orlok might, every ounce of its living, hot blood.

It is a desire to return, once more, to the must-smelling realm of the university campus theater, in which I saw—though not for the first time—**Caligari** and **Nosferatu** resurrected on the big screen, with genuine piano accompaniment, just as they were so long ago.

In the shadows lurk the images and visions that haunt our nightmares eternally. They call to us through the ages.

Caligari presents the world projected by the picture as a nightmare of weird, non-Euclidean "angled spaces between" (to borrow from H.P. Lovecraft a little)—an outgrowth of the mad, internal life of the narrator, by which reality and demented fantasy are bent into a single and singularly deluded state: the living nightmare. But what, we may ask upon seeing it, is fantasy—and what is illusion?

Nosferatu gives us the old, regal tale of the vampire noble—Dracula, of course, by another name—but here stripped entirely of the sexiness later displayed by Lugosi and other interpreters. Instead, we face a rat-like, cadaverous revenant from a horror folktale: the plague-bearing harbinger of death, bringing a swarm of rats in his wake. His death, in a puff of smoke, sees him evaporate in the light of dawn, dissipating like the last threads of

a terrifying dream.

Metropolis throws us forward, seemingly, into a mid-Twenties dream of what the future could present. It is Wells' classic division between the Eloi and the Morlocks—and it is also a religious allegory, set like a glittering jewel amid what, for the time, was a dazzling spectacle of state-of-the-art cinematography, set design, and special effects.

The messianic undercurrent of the film adds a fascinating dimension to its materialistic, class-structured dialectic. Maria is the virginal, spiritual *Holy Mother* to the messianic Freder, who is separated from his father—not an Old Testament patriarch, but a ruthless, tyrannical Nimrod who has built a "Tower of Babel" from which Mephistophelian chaos erupts. The film prefigures our world of humanoid robots and AI with uncanny clarity. The dream becomes reality—and the reality, another dream.

Edison's Frankenstein is an abrupt meditation on Shelley's singularly magnificent and prophetic novel—what might qualify as the most important ever written in the English language. Certainly, in a metaphorical sense, it is the most prophetic.

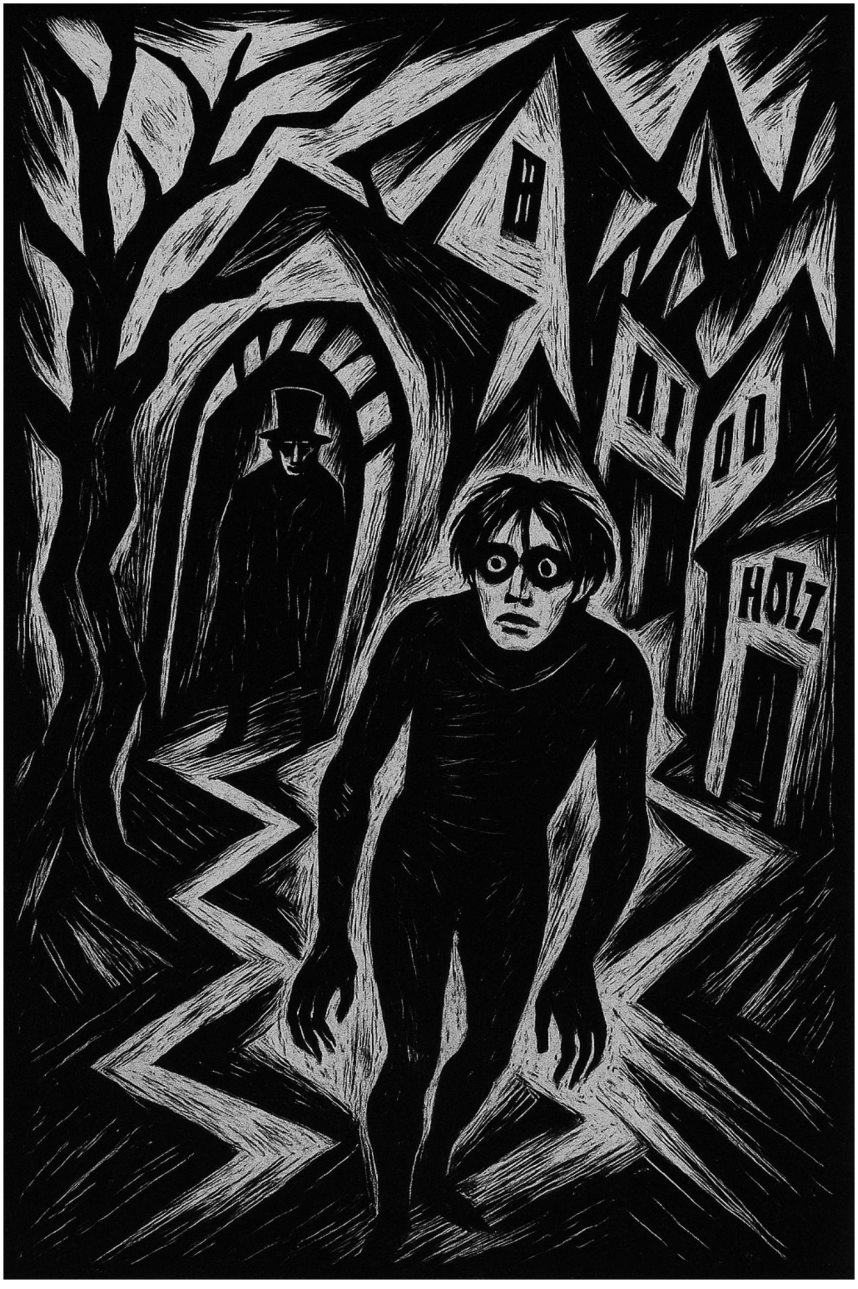
The grotesque monster portrayed by Charles Ogle is a reflection of the inner darkness of the arrogant, mad Frankenstein, who exults in that darkness like an alchemist, bringing to the golden gateway of life a creature born fantastically from bits of flesh in a boiling vat. At the apogee of the short film, the creature sees itself in a mirror—and it is not the monster's eyes that are looking back, but Frankenstein's, now wearing the guise of his creation. He cannot believe what he has become. Symbolically, he *is* the thing he has given birth to."You may live to see man-made horrors beyond your comprehension,"
—Nikola Tesla

We can leave it at that. —**The Author**

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari

Adapted from the Screenplay by Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer

Silent Scream



Prolog

Two men were sitting by a wall when the girl walked by, her eyes ringed by dark shadows of want as one leaned over and said, "The spirits, they are everywhere. Surrounding us. We cannot see them. Do you see that girl? She was once my fiance! Ah yes, I will tell you the story of what I have gone through. But you may not believe it!"

And so he began. And he began with the coming of Caligari, who was a curious, stooped figure in a great stovepipe hat, with round glasses perched atop his nose, and whisps of white hair pouring out of the sides of his hat. He walked bent over, with a cane pick-pick-picking the ground like a hungry dog's forepaw, and his white-gloved hands had three lines drawn on each side, giving his hands a weirdly skeletal appearance.

He had already gotten the necessary permits to perform his somnambulist act during the fair, which was held on one of the sloping crests of Holstenwall, and which was accessible to the townies and others by a steep staircase leading up, up, up.

"I met him there, or my eyes drank him in, and then, taking a handbill he offered me, I went to see Alan.

"Now, Alan was a studious young man who lived in a garret room, studying German philosophy all day. He had scant furnishings, but one piece that did stand out very much was a certain high-backed chair with FIVE slats, going straight up. The damn thing could not have been comfortable. His only look-see out to the world beyond the tottering old roofs and leaning crazily devil chimneys of Holstenwall was a single high attic window, that let in the moonlight, soberly.

"It was in here that Alan would studiously pour over the small print of his old philosophical texts, studiously taking notes, living on bread and cheese and water, and pining for a day when he might escape, one supposes. To that end, I brought him the handbill that Caligari had given me, the one that blared, in huge bullhead lettering 'SOMNAMBULIST! Eighth Wonder of the World! Come and SEE! Cesare! Asleep for Seven Years! He will perform feats while sleeping that many men cannot perform awake!'"

And Now Let Us Switch the Narrative from First to Third Person...

"Oh it is nonsense, surely!" said Alan. But Francis said, "Oh, don't be so sure. I know of many, many strange and unsettling things, or at least, I have heard of them. Come, doesn't your German philosophy tell you there are many strange things undreamed of in Heaven and Earth?"

Alan retorted, "Shakespeare tells us that!"

"All the better!" quoth Francis, stuffing the handbill into his pocket. "Now, do you want to die like a rat in a trap in this musty room, or do you want to come with me for a little, and see what the outside world looks like? What you're missing!"

And so they went. Earlier, Caligari had been to the office of the town clerk to get the necessary permit and was astounded to see two men, both sitting high up in a couple of chairs, perched over a wooden table that was the tallest table he had ever seen. Why, it was almost scraping the roof!

He handed up his handbill. The bespectacled and foul-looking old gent took it in one annoyed hand and glanced it over

quizzically. He screwed up his nose and narrowed his eyes, and said, "What sort of a show is this, a 'somnambulist'?"

Caligari, in a croaking voice that sounded like baby bones being broken, said, "A sleepwalker!" (But, it is important to note, that this was only ONE of Caligari's voices; and that he could boom like an elephant when on the bally platform, or drop to a low, murmuring hypnotist's voice, when trying to entrance his prey.)

So it was done.

Alan and Francis walked through the cobbled darkness of the street until they met up with Jane, who was their mutual girlfriend. Francis knew Jane would favor HIS attention in time; Alan was too enthralled in his studies to make much of a suitable suitor. Be that as it may, he never pressed the issue very hard, and let things progress how they would.

"Oh my two friends," she said, standing between the both of them, her hands pressing their respective chests lightly. "Let us to the Biergarten repair, *ja*? It is late; and hot, and I am a little thirsty!"

And so they went to have a drink. But first Francis told her, "Yes, Jane my dear, we will go. But then we want to go and see the somnambulist act at the fair. Isn't that a charming idea?"

Jane agreed. "It sounds positively enthralling! What a way for three old friends to spend an evening!"

And so they went. And after a cold stein of beer each, they made their way through the cobbled streets to the fairgrounds, and up the steep steps to a place where Caligari had parked his wagon.

Outside, a large painting of "Cesare the Somnambulist" was unfurled. it depicted an exceedingly thin man in a black leotard,

with long skinny arms, a long, pale face, and a strange haircut that made him look as if someone had stuck a bowl on top of his head and lopped the sides of his hair off. Around the eyes were the tell-tale familiar black marks of the vampire. But, Francis reminded himself, this was NOT the undead.

Was it?

A crowd had gathered by the flickering, guttering lamps--the show, Francis observed, was happening very late. Perhaps Caligari had been so instructed by the Town Clerk to hold his exhibition late at night, to prevent children from being present. "It is not a thing fit for daylight!" he could well imagine the Town Clerk exclaiming while slapping his fat belly and liking the sound.

(Unknown to Francis, just hours before, the Town Clerk had been slain in his bed by an unknown assailant. His servant had found the body, but swore he had heard nothing the whole night. It was only when he came into the room to check on his ailing master that he found the horror of his condition. A policeman had been summoned. The Town Clerk, they determined, had been stabbed repeatedly with a weird, sharp instrument that looked like a pointed funnel. What the instrument could be or where it came from was a mystery to both men. The motive was easier to conceive: the Town Clerk was widely disliked, and they put it down to someone sneaking in with a personal grudge, and doing the man in. The policeman thought it better not to raise his whistle, but instead sent the servant to fetch the morgue wagon.)

Caligari came out, waving a huge bell in one hand, holding a poster of his exhibit in the other. A crowd began to assemble at the bally platform, as Caligari exclaimed, "Come one, come all, step right up! Come and see the Eighth Wonder of the World! The great Cesare the Somnambulist! Just twenty-three years old,

and asleep for every one of those twenty years. But, as he sleeps, he speaks with the strange forces of the unknown in his dreams! He can answer any question put to him. Cesare knows the past! Cesare sees the future! Come step right up, all are welcome! All are welcome!"

And holding back the flap of the curtain, he ushered a growing crowd inside. Alan and Francis eagerly followed, although Alan sniffed that it was all probably "humbug," and Francis tended to agree. But, inside, they found a little stage, a curtain, and rows of chairs set before them. But nobody bothered to sit. It was all too exciting.

Caligari suddenly stepped forth, and pulling back the curtain, revealed a wooden cabinet. He said, "Inside, ladies and gentlemen, Cesare sleeps the sleep of the damned, hearing all the dead souls cry throughout eternity. But, see, I know the secret to arousing him from his death-like slumber! I, and I alone, can call him forth from his cabinet to answer any question you might ask. Cesare knows all! Cesare sees all! Come! Come!"

And with that, he opened first one door of the cabinet, and then another. The audience bent forward, murmuring, some gasping, women holding their hands to their mouths, covering the eyes of their children as they took in the weird, cadaverous figure standing upright, like a giant doll, in the wooden box. Caligari held his little stick or wand up and spoke some gibberish words, then exclaimed, "Cesare, hear me, I command you! Open your eyes and awake! Come forth!"

Nothing happened for a moment, but then, slowly, slowly, the figure raised its arms to the center of its chest, its fingers splayed out before it, and slowly, oh so slowly, crept forward. It was wearing the familiar black leotard from the poster, but now the

audience could see the clothing was broken by what looked like white stripes crisscrossing the legs and chest. At the neck was a perfectly round collar shaped like two rings, one atop the other.

Cesare had a squared cut of hair, with longish sides, and a deep, white pallor of greyish death about him. The eyes were indeed ringed with black, like that of a fairy tale vampire or ghoul. He slowly opened those eyes, and the crowd shuddered.

Caligari said, "Go on! Go on! He is awake now! But he is still a medium for the powers from beyond! Ask him any question you like, and see if he cannot answer you!"

Suddenly, men began to cry out questions; and a few women, as well. One asked, "Are you in any pain?" to which Cesare replied, "No." Another, "Do you believe in God?" Cesare shook his head, but the audience couldn't discern if he was shaking it as a negative or affirmative. No matter. One man wanted to know if he would ever be rich. Cesare replied, "You are rich already, in spirit." To which the irate man replied, "I'd rather be rich in Deutschmarks, my good man!" and the crowd roared in laughter.

Some asked about their ancestors, about small personal matters, and each declared with wonder that Cesare was somehow correct. Finally, Alan told Francis, "I'm going to ask him a question he'll not be able to answer. I'm going to ask him how long have I to live."

Francis felt his blood run cold. He said, "No, no Alan! What if you don't like the answer you get?"

But Alan was stubborn, stoic, and cynical. He thought it was all a charade. It was an outgrowth, Francis saw, of his studying philosophical works all the time. Alan believed the future to be

undetermined, and so could not swallow the prognostications of the somnambulist.

"Alan, no I beg you..."

But already he piped up, "How long have I to live?"

And Cesare stopped for a moment, and, gaining a curious look in his strange, hollow eyes, said, "Not long. YOU SHALL BE DEAD BEFORE DAWN."

And suddenly Alan was no longer laughing and jovial and amused. He began to breathe heavily, his smile fast turning into a look of horror, as he knew the Somnambulist's knowledge of the past had been unerringly correct. But could he see the future?

Francis pulled his friend by the lapels, and said, "Come, Alan, let us leave."

Out the fairgrounds, they went, and following them was Jane, who had not been with them to see Caligari's sleeper. She wondered at the distressed look on Alan's face.

"What is the matter, my dear? Cat got your tongue."

Neither man said anything to Jane about what Cesare had told Alan concerning being dead before dawn. Alan now walked. They made idle conversation until, up ahead, they could hear a newsboy hawking papers in the street.

"A little late for that," said Jane, curiously.

"Extra! Extra! Read all about it. Town Clerk killed by unknown killer! The reward of 10,000 Deutschmarks for information leading to the capture! Extra! Extra!"

The three approached the boy, and Alan bought a paper. His face went tight with worry. It was as if, all around him, in the weird twisting streets and alleys of Holstenwall (it was rumored

an ancient alchemist had built the place, based on non-Euclidian angles and occult proportions; an old legend) he could see death, in the form of the skinny, pale cadaver that had emerged from the wooden cabinet, creeping.

Holstenwall rose on top of the pointed hill like a cluster of crazily leaning little hats atop a great tit, with the steeple of the church as the marble nipple punctuating the madness. The close, narrow, stinking streets and alleyways could be hiding anybody, at any time, in their foul, dark, and throat-like passages.

"I must be getting home now," said Jane. Already, it is very, very late. Oh, or very early, depending on how you look at it. I fear my father will be worried."

"Alright my dear," said Francis, doffing his hat. "We'll see you home, safe and sound." And so they did, heading back to their dwellings, Francis told Alan, "She likes us both equally, I fear. But she can love only one of us. Whichever one she chooses, Francis my friend, we shall always remain boon companions!"

And so Alan agreed. But his mind was far away.

Later, Alan was sleeping the sleep of the righteous, the moonlight casting an evil glare over the muffled darkness of his very severe room. A shadow crept from that darkness, into the light. Alan stirred. He could hear faint, stertorous breathing, growing louder. Something was creeping forward in the darkness.

Then, hands, reaching out, pale hands, gleaming by moonlight in the darkness. A shadow against the wall showed a sharp instrument being raised. And then the screaming.

END OF PART 1

PART 2

The woman was an old maid, and she burst into Francis's room and exclaimed, "Oh, it's terrible! Oh, so terrible! Oh, murder!" She fell to weeping without explaining herself, and Francis took her in his hands and shook her.

"Oh, sir," she said, out of breath, clearly, from running all the way from where Alan was living. "Master Alan is dead! Someone has crept in in the silence of the night, and they have MURDERED HIM."

Francis felt his head swim and his heart pound in shock. His mind leaped to the prophecy of Cesare. "You will be dead before dawn," the sleepwalker had foretold. And he had been proven once more correct!

"Come!" said Francis, "there is not a moment to lose! We must go to the authorities first, and then I will go to Jane's father, Doctor Olsen. He is known to be a brilliant investigator."

And Francis grabbed his coat, and in a few moments, both were out the door.

***

"I promise," he told the gendarmes, swaying slightly with the force of his emotion. "I swear to you, I will find the villain, the blackguard that has done this, and I will make him pay!"

The two officers had been seated, one on either side of the tall desk, bent over their paperwork. It had been a hard few days in Holstenwall. Murder seemed to be rearing its ugly head where never before, it had been known. or, not widely so.

One officer bent over, eager to see if he could smell spirits on Francis's breath. He was disappointed, but said, "There, there my

dear man. We understand, both of us, that you have suffered a tremendous loss! But, you must not take on the characteristics of a vigilante. You must not go seeking justice or vengeance on your own. You might start a lynch mob, and that is an ugly thing. Now, I suggest you go home and try to get some rest. You have a funeral to attend. and that can be an exhausting experience in and of itself. Can it not?"

Francis was hardly mollified by this, but, feeling the stern hand of the gendarmes on his shoulder, he said softly, "Yes, yes...of course you're right. I'll go home now. *Guten nacht,* Herr Komisar."

And Francis stumbled out of the station house, and down the long, shadowy corridor, down the steps, weeping silently. He could still see the bleeding body of Alan where it sprawled, murdered, thrust through with a sharp instrument as he lay in his bed. Beneath the bed, dripping down the sheets and staining the nice white linen was a slick flow of Alan's precious blood. Oh, it was terrible and sickening beyond belief.

Finally, as he sat on the stoop at the bottom of the stairs, immersed in the gloom, he saw a familiar, welcoming face coming toward him from the shadow. It was Jane. His heart sank. How to tell her the tragic news?

"It's alright,' she said. 'I have already heard it from the Town Crier. Oh, poor, poor Alan! Why on Earth would anyone want to do that wonderful, noble, brilliant young man harm?"

She suddenly grasped Francis in both her arms. They began to weep together, to console each other. Somewhere nearby, though, murder was still afoot.

Shuffling, shambling heavily in the darkness, a huge man crept through the shadows of the coming dawn, with a poignard in his

waistband and murder in his heart. He was heavy and filthy, wearing high boots caked in mud and manure, and a dirty tunic. His fat face was unshaven and his body stank. He was determined to get inside, to rob the old woman, to do her in if needs be. Sure, he might go to the gallows later--but what of it? His entire life had been preparing him for this. When he dug the graves he later came back and robbed, to sell the bodies to a doctor at the medical college--was he not also tempting fate every time? Would they not gibbet him for such an act? You could be sure, he thought bitterly, the doctor would get away, scot-free.

But now, like demonic voices calling his name from afar, he could hear, deep within his soul, the calling to commit evil, to commit a great atrocity. He could feel the burning desire to KILL deep within his flesh, and it goaded him onward, through the rapidly approaching dawn, to use the last precious minutes of shadow and night to his advantage.

Carefully, oh so carefully, he managed to make his big body fit through the doorway in near-total quiet, making as little noise as possible, as he stealthily went up the stairs, creeping like a phantom, conscious of every creak and groan of the old wood underneath his scuffed, filthy leather boots. He would go up to her room. He would try the door. If he found it locked, he would use his skills as a thief to pick the lock, to gain entry.

And so he did.

Through the close, and up the stairs went he, and when he put his huge, scuffed, filthy hand upon the door, he found it opened easily. He was careful not to rattle the handle in the doorframe. He crept forward, into the musty dark, smelling the smell of sour cabbage and old flatulence, and must, and the closed stink of air that is trapped. He saw a white shape loom in the moonlight.

Before him, on the bed, the old woman lay, snoozing in her exhaustion. Dreaming dreams no mortal ever dreamed before, he laughed to himself silently. Or dreams of being young again, of being desired. He felt in the waistband of his trousers for the knife, felt his breath grow ragged as the blood began to course in his veins. His heartbeat he could hear in his ears. Just a moment's work and it would all be over. Then, as she lay bleeding, dying, he would ravish the body. And when he had slaked his thirst in that regard, he would abscond with the golden candlestick beside the bed. Yes, a memento, a souvenir. Or something valuable he could fence, later.

Closer, closer...

Just then.

Damnit! The woman had a cat. It meowed quite loudly. He froze in his tracks. A twin set of eyes opened in the white lump on the bed. For a moment, the old woman was frozen, along with him, in a moment of dream-like terror. Then, issuing forth with a strangled cry, she grasped the candlestick beside the bed in her hand and sent it swirling toward him in the moonlight.

It impacted with his skull, sending forth a dull thud, feeling as if a hammer had clocked him in the noggin. he drew back.

In a moment, possessing a speed he could never have given her credit for, the old woman had flown from her bed and was at the window.

"Murder!" she cried. "Help, oh God, help! Murder! Murder. MURDER!"

And below, he could already hear the nightwatchman blow his whistle, hear the sound of early morning laborers begin shouting, gathering in the cobbled streets below. He felt the blood trickle

forth from his scalp and heard the first footfalls on the stairs as the men below raced up to the old woman.

And he knew, just then, that a gallows finally awaited. He smiled between trickles of blood in his teeth.

Francis and Jane had gone back to Jane's house, which was a very beautiful and lavish showplace owned by her eminent father, Dr. Olsen. The good doctor was a surgeon, and his taste for the finer things in life showed in every angled space.

Jane led Francis pat a dining room hanging with silk curtains, that looked like a French bistro, and whose walls were adorned with an ornate painting of clouds and the moon. She took him right to the office of her father, where the worried-looking old man was bent over a dusty volume. Francis wasted no time:

"Sir, Doctor Olsen, I must beg your pardon, but I am here to enlist your aid."

The Doctor looked at him quizzically but said nothing.

"My friend--our friend, Alan--has been murdered most cruelly by persons unknown. I thought with your expertise in such matters, we might track the culprit down and bring him to justice." and Francis continued, his voice growing low and more impassioned. He said, "Sir, there is something, some evil that has come to our fair city. I know the legends of the old alchemist that built Holstenwall, how once in every generation, evil befalls us, coming down lies a black cloud across the face of the land." Francis then thought he sounded foolish, and said no more.

Without opening his mouth, Dr. Olsen arose, and picking a note off of his desk, he handed it to Francis.

It read:

Dear Doctor, I request you to be present at the interrogation of a suspect we have apprehended in the murder of the Town Clerk and the young man this early morning hours. Please come within one-quarter of an hour if at all possible. We humbly acknowledge your brilliance in such matters.

Signed,

Gerhard von Knockwanger

Chief Inspector, Holstenwall Polizei

The two men were out the door as soon as the Doctor grabbed his coat.

***

It was soon that they were at the station. Doctor Olsen leaned forward, and said, "My dear fellow, what could have possessed you to commence an attack on such a poor defenseless old woman? She had no money, no great possessions, and had done you no wrong."

The man, the would-be murderer, sat in the center of the room in a high-backed chair with five slats going up the back. Very uncomfortable. He was sweating and shivering at the same time. Dr. Olsen turned and looked at the officers and Francis with a bemused look on his face. He continued.

"Tell me, are there voices compelling you forward, to commit these terrible acts?" He was met with stony silence from the man and continued: "Sometimes, it is all we can do to unburden ourselves of our guilt. And, my you seem to have quite a lot to be guilty of!"

At this, the man retorted, "Alright, alright, I admit. I was going to do the old woman. But I swear to you: I had nothing to do with

the other murders! The Town Clerk, or the young fellow, what's his name? Alan, you say? No. I never touched either of them. But I of course knew of the Town Clerk being killed, and I hoped they would find the one who did it, and hang the crime of killing the old woman on him. Not the other way around. Look, how could I possibly commit two murders in one night? Do you see any blood on my clothes, my boots?"

And indeed, Dr. Olsen and Francis, and the assembled officers had to admit they did not.

Outside, the wind howled like a lonely banshee through the empty streets.

***

Jane sat reading a small book of poems. She could hear the ticking of the clock quite loudly like the beating of a baby's heart. Where were Francis and her father? She was starting to worry, it seemed as if they had been gone so long.

She tried to concentrate on the words on what she was reading.

> *"Lay me down love and let life fade away, I would sleep in that somber field. Turned into darkness, from darkness we turn, and to darkness forever we yield..."*

Oh, very gloomy sentiments. She didn't like that. Not presently. The clock ticked. Shadows moved across the wall. What was keeping the men?

> *"Making the most of our sorrow and pain, and shrugging away tomorrows. Lay me down lover, I'll feel no more pain, in this field choked with sobering sorrows."*

Very bad to be reading such stuff at this time, she thought. Not in the throws of her bereavement for Alan. it was as if she was casting ashes across his grave.

Still, she continued, despite herself.

> *"And Hell is eternity icy and cold, I would breathe in the dust of the ages; and lay down my body with roses and mold, a death for a sin is the wages. Looking toward God in my funereal sleep, I am icy and cold in my plot; I wonder if Jesus Christ's love ran so deep, he might bleed a new life into rot."*

She shuddered. Icy fingers seemed to creep down her spine as she read. Loneliness and gloom filled her soul. She thought of the handsome, noble face of Alan, gone too soon. His face would begin to decay, the flesh creep away until all that was left was the blue funk of memory. The decayed flesh of one who had met death while young. Food for the worms.

She cast her glance downward as the letters crawled across the page.

> *"And here in my sepulchral city of tears, I am pauper and prisoner in pain. I pine for my love in the wastelands above, may she lay down and be mine again. The nights are unending and daybreak is torture, and loneliness my only boon. Lay down my love and let life breathe its last, sleep in this somber field, come, but not soon."*

It was not an hour later she had closed the book, and, grabbing her shawl, was out, into the night.

***

The man denied he had had anything to do with the murders. He said, "If you want to go and find out who is responsible for

them, well, I'd look long and hard at that Caligari, that showman who has blown into town. His freak he keeps in a box, well, I've heard the talk! I've heard the rumors!"

Dr. Olsen leaned forward, asking "What rumors?"

The fat would-be killer simply smiled.

Meanwhile, Jane had walked to the top of the staircase leading down, from the bally platform where Caligari had exhibited Cesare just last night. the scene up here was beautiful, the weird, conical little houses of Holstenwall marching upward like roosting white birds, leaning crazily, tilting at odd, obtuse angles, punctuated by the stone steeple of the church. And could she hear the bell ringing in the distance? She progressed down the steep stairs, holding firm to the rail. Below, the wagons of the carnival were assembled, and, as if hiding away in the shadow from the rest, she spied Caligari's crazily tilting old wagon, a weird conveyance that looked as if a strong wind would blow it to pieces. A strange, trapezohedron of a window was crossed by several slats that looked as if they were mimicking the Cross of Lorraine. She knew it to be Caligari's wagon from the poster on a stick of Cesare, left outside.

She approached it, her heart thumping in her chest. Outside the door, the coffin-like cabinet of Dr. Caligari stood upright. She well guessed what was in the cabinet, but she had to see it with her own eyes.

She approached. She could see a face dimly peering at her through the weird, skewed glass (the entire trailer leaned crazily to one side as if a strong wind might knock it over), and she could see the strange, whispy white hair and round little glasses of the stooped, heavy man in the stovepipe hat. He was eyeing her

through the filthy glass. Soon he was out the door, and standing on the steps leading below.

"Ah!" he said, rubbing his hands together. "I see you have come for a private exhibition of my little sleeping pet, Cesare! Well, asleep he may be, but he hears you. Do You doubt? Ah yes, I tell you, he hears the beating, the hammering of your heart, and he hears the breathing in your chest, your lungs. And he can hear the blood coursing through your veins. And he knows, my precious pet. He knows you are here, and he wants to ....meet you. So very badly. So very, very badly!"

And with that, Caligari put out one gloved hand (she noted the lines on the back of his gloves, that made his hands seem like that of a skeleton), and thrust open the cabinet door.

Jane put her hand to her head. She felt as if she might scream.

There the man himself stood, in mocking repose, a thin, cadaverous male ballerina in black, with a medieval mop-top haircut and deep black circles for eyes. His mouth was a stiletto slash of black, and his skin bore the pallor of fresh cream. His head pivoted on his neck, and his eyes opened. Both he and Caligari wore the same expression of mocking cruelty.

Jane ran, screaming, her heart pounding in her chest.

Francis had been to spy on Caligari at night. Peering through the window of the old weirdly-leaning trailer, he saw Caligari preparing mush. He saw the mad freak owner open the coffin-like cabinet as it lay on the floor. Slowly, the dark, skeletal form of Cesare raised itself, and, Caligari bending over it, began to slowly chew the sloppy stuff being ladled forth from the wooden bowl. Cesare ate reflectively, chewing with his eyes closed. Alan could not watch it for very long. He put his arm to his mouth, feeling

his gorge rise. Something was sickening, animal-like, brutal somehow, in this display, and he recoiled from it, nauseated.

He remembered this. And he felt certain that Caligari, and Cesare, were the one factor that had entered Holstenwall that could account for the strange sense of spiritual doom that had descended, like a plague of locusts, upon the already mad little town. He told the gendarmerie, "We must go to Caligari's at once."

But before they could move their muscles, a man came rushing into the police station. He was wild, frothing at the mouth, and had quite a tale to tell.

***

Cesare crept across the shadows and moonlight like a ballerina. Before him, huddled in bed, lay the sleeping Jane, tossing and turning from her uneasy slumber, her wild and delirious dreams of a realm where the dead lived, celebrating their birthdays and eating their cake as they lay in their hospital beds, with rotting, infected mouths. It was the other side of reality, perhaps, but one cannot often divine where the dream ends, and "real life" begins. It is all one continuum, perhaps.

Closer, closer. The silent night was marked outside only by the occasional clatter of hooves on the cobbles. Otherwise, not even the cicadas were wont to bring their peculiar music to the stillness of this dark and spectral hour. Closer, closer, he crept, his breath growing ragged, his heart beating within his thin breast like the tick-tock workings of some vile timepiece, counting down the moments till annihilation. Closer, closer, and he could hear her snoring, her little gasps, and murmurs, and he felt his hands grow rigid, his fingers claw-like, as they reached out, his

cadaverous flesh painted bone white in the misty light from a pale and waxing moon. Closer, closer.

Suddenly, she cries out. She is in his grasp, struggling. HE subdues her. He feels her flesh go limp as she faints away. Soon, she is thrown over his shoulder. He leers maniacally, and if anyone could have seen his face at that moment, if another, perhaps hapless or helpless soul had been there, he might have thought he stared straight into the face of the Devil himself. But no matter.

Cesare was out the window, climbing up the rickety rain gutter to the roof, where he bounded over the dangerous distances between buildings, Jane bundled over his shoulder. Below, in the streets, he could hear a man cry out, suddenly. He knew what that meant. The normal men hated him. And they would not like what he was doing now.

He leaped perilously over chimneys, leaning rooftops, trying to maintain his delicate purchase as he felt loose and rotten shingles give way beneath his feet. He knew he must come down from these heights, or risk death. Soon he found a rickety metal ladder leading into a dripping, filthy alleyway. He descended to the gravel; already he could hear the tumult of a lynch mob developing, hear his name being called. "Look, it is Cesare! And he has a girl he's killed!"

It was not true. She was not dead. But, where could he run to now? He did not know, but he blindly went down the length and width of the alleys until he came to level ground. Behind him, he knew, they were searching; he could hear the voices go up in the streets, the many voices blending into an excited chorus of babbling. All eyes peering around for him, all hands willing and able to clutch his throat. He ran blindly, toward the city gates, to

the countryside. Soon, he was being chased by a mob ready to lynch.

***

At one point, amid the crooked, bare branches of the trees, he dropped his burden from his shoulder. Exhausted, barely able to keep himself upright, he moved down the narrow strip of country lane, but he could hear the barking of dogs, the babel of excited voices, and footfalls behind. They had chased him across the field and now to the hillside above the water. He could hear then, suddenly: "Look! There he is! There is Cesare!"

Was that the report of a rifle?

Perhaps he thought, in his final moments, it was the snap of his soul, making a pop like a gun, leaving his tormented, slave-like being, and ascending to new lands. On his dying lips, one word:

"Futility."

And then there was no more.

***

The breathless messenger related all this to Francis and the gendarmes. Quickly, donning his hat and coat, Francis and the officers went with the man to where the body of Cesare lay like a brittle, broken, black-clad doll amid the sparse shade of the barren trees.

"Well," said Francis. "I can confirm that the suspect in these murders has been locked up in jail while all of this was occurring. Cesare is the guilty party! But, come: we must go to see his master. To Caligari!"

And with that, Francis and the police headed for Caligari's wagon home.

***

"Quickly, step to the side. Hans, keep an eye on him. We will quickly see to this!"

The Polizei pointed down at the box. Inside was what appeared to be the body of the somnambulist. The Polizei poked it with a stick, but, as expected there was no movement.

Francis ran after the hunched little figure as it flew down the country lane. Where was he going? thought Francis wildly. Suddenly, twin gates seemed to loom in the distance. The figure of Caligari ran through them, the attendants recognizing him and granting him entrance. Francis then saw the sign on the gate: SANITORIUM, it read. He approached more slowly, his arms raised. He cried: "A man that has gone in there is guilty of murder! Murder I tell you!"

The two attendants looked at each other with puzzled amazement. One of them asked, "If we let you inside, what will you do?"

Francis curled his fingers and said, "I will lay hands on the filthy killer!" he rasped, gritting his teeth. The attendant at the gate asked, "And you can point him out to us, this man?" To which Alan replied, "Certainly! It is a matter of a moment!"

And so the gate swung open. Francis went into the courtyard cautiously. he saw what seemed to be almost familiar faces milling about, coming into the court from triple arching doorways in the distance. A strange pattern seemed to have been painted on the floor, coming to a central point and radiating outward like spokes--or, perhaps, rays of the sun. Alan saw Caligari disappear beneath one of the central arches, after looking at him half-hidden in the shadows of the arch. Francis followed.

Down a slim corridor with weird, creeping vine-like tendrils or tentacles painted across it, like streaks of errant shadow. Into a door and up a flight of stairs he could hear the feet pounding. He heard a door slam. he approached it, slowly, cautiously. He didn't bother knocking.

In he went. A balding character with wild, whispy hair, blazing eyes, and round glasses sat at a desk amid clutter and debris, piles of old books, and human skulls. The face looked up. It was--

"The man Himself!" cried Francis, pointing. Behind him were the attendants at the gate. One of them approached Alan and whispered in his ear.

"Ah!" cried Francis. The character at the desk looked as if he didn't understand what any of them were doing there. (And perhaps he didn't.)

"Forgive me, signore'," began Francis, "But I had you mistaken for someone else, someone I thought had run in here. Excuse me!" And Francis retreated with the attendants at the gate, who told him, "We will search this place as he sleeps. We will keep him under observation. And, if it is as you say, we will--"

The man drove his fist loudly into the palm of his hand and made a sound as if he was splatting a giant vermin. or perhaps a boisenberry pie.

Caligari (or the Herr Director of the asylum, take your pick) slept soundly while the three men crept to his office and rifled his things. Finally, they brought forth both his diary and a huge old book about...a somnambulist. Both were eye-opening finds, and both relayed this tale:

> *“In 1683, a showman came to Florence to exhibit a sleepwalker, a somnambulist named "Cesare,", who slept*

> *in a cabinet only to be called forth to predict the future. This mountebank made a nice killing in profits, before being run out of town and disappearing before they could lynch him. For you see, Cesare predicted death to many prominent members of the town, and invariably, they ALWAYS MET SUCH A GRIM END IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME."*

The big, dusty old volume was quite adamant on this. It was suspected, the book claimed, that the mountebank, Caligari, was responsible for these deaths.

All of this was shocking enough stuff, but the Herr Director's diary went even further. They found an entry that read:

> *"I am waiting, simply waiting for the correct specimen to come forth, one that I can hypnotize and turn into such a somnambulist as Cesare. It will be my Cesare, as, everywhere, they will speak my name with wonder and terror, and everywhere, yes, people will begin to disappear."*

And then he wrote:

> *"Everywhere, I begin to see the words floating in the air, like the feathers of a cryptic bird. 'Du Must Caligari Werden!" it calls out to me, in the mother tongue. 'You must Caligari become!' And so that is what I will become."*

He described being haunted by those words, as they called out to him, in vocalizations he could hear, as he tottered, with his strange, mincing, rooster-gate, through the weird twisted alleys of Holstenwall, the painted shadows leering like the grin of a

psychopath. One whose mouth, incidentally, might have been carved by the slash of a rusted razor.

The Herr Direktor was brought in. The assembled men, each glowering grimly, showed him the evidence of the diary with knowing, accusatory faces. "No," he cried. "No! you'll not put me in irons! I'm an innocent man, I tell you! Stop, it's all a fraud! This young scoundrel--" and he pointed here at Alan, "has concocted it all! I'm not a madman, I'm a doctor! Do you hear me? I'll not be locked up! I'm a doctor, I'm a doctor--"

He was hustled into a straight jacket and locked away in a white sanitorium room with cracks in the plaster walls and sluggish insects crawling to their deaths across the dirty floor. Here, he raved at the shadows on the walls.

And it was here that Francis ceased his story, the older man beside him reeling a little from the shock of it, while, along the twisting path between the trees, came the pale, ghostly figure of Jane, seemingly lost beyond the reach of human contact. "So," finished Francis, "you can see that spirits are everywhere! Can you not? They are always attendants, always on the cusp--waiting, ever waiting! They have brought my life to ruin!"

And Francis got up and went to the sunburst painted on the cement floor of the court. Around him, the patients thronged as if they, too, were as asleep as Cesare.

And then Francis spied Cesare--alone, hidden in an alcove, covered by shadow. He cradled a huge white bouquet. Who had given it to him? It contrasted blackly against his dark, lithe, dancer's form. A woman sat near to him. She seemed to be playing an invisible harpsichord. Was that Jane, his Jane?

A bearded Old Testament patriarch raved: "Ye sons of iniquity and ye whoremongers! Ye wizards, adulterers, fornicators, and hewers of graven images! The Lord has told me, pouring the poison of his wrath into my ear, my very ear! Do you hear me? He tells me of the coming Judgement, the vengeance and wrath that is His, and His alone! Oh, ye Sons of the lawless and wicked, do not tempt the Lord Your God! Do not think to escape his Judgement! Do not think one among you will not feel the bite of his scourge, smell the stench of brimstone, or escape the flames of his indomitable fiery wrath! Not one! Not one! Not one I say!"

Francis wandered across the court, lost; disoriented. Soon, it was meal time. Some attendants in white coats came for him and led him away to the room wherein he was locked in, shadows slanting across the barred windows, in quite a fetching interplay of dark and light.

In his office, the Herr Director said to the assembled, "Gentleman, ah! It is quite plain that he thinks that I am that mystic Caligari. Yes, yes, we can laugh at the delusions of the mad. They seem to us preposterous, absurd. Beyond reason--"

"Here, here," said one of the assembled men, puffing at his pipe.

"But," the Herr Director began again, "I think instead that we must show understanding, pity. After all, were it not for the grace of God, as the old saying goes, we might suffer such hallucinations, *ja*? Is it not so?"

"Here, here," agreed the assembled. The Herr Director put down his great, dusty volume, got up, and with his mincing, rooster walk, went over to the sideboard to pour himself a brandy. He drank deeply, saying, "*Ja*, he thinks that I, of all people, am that...mystic...Caligari. But," and his face grew grave

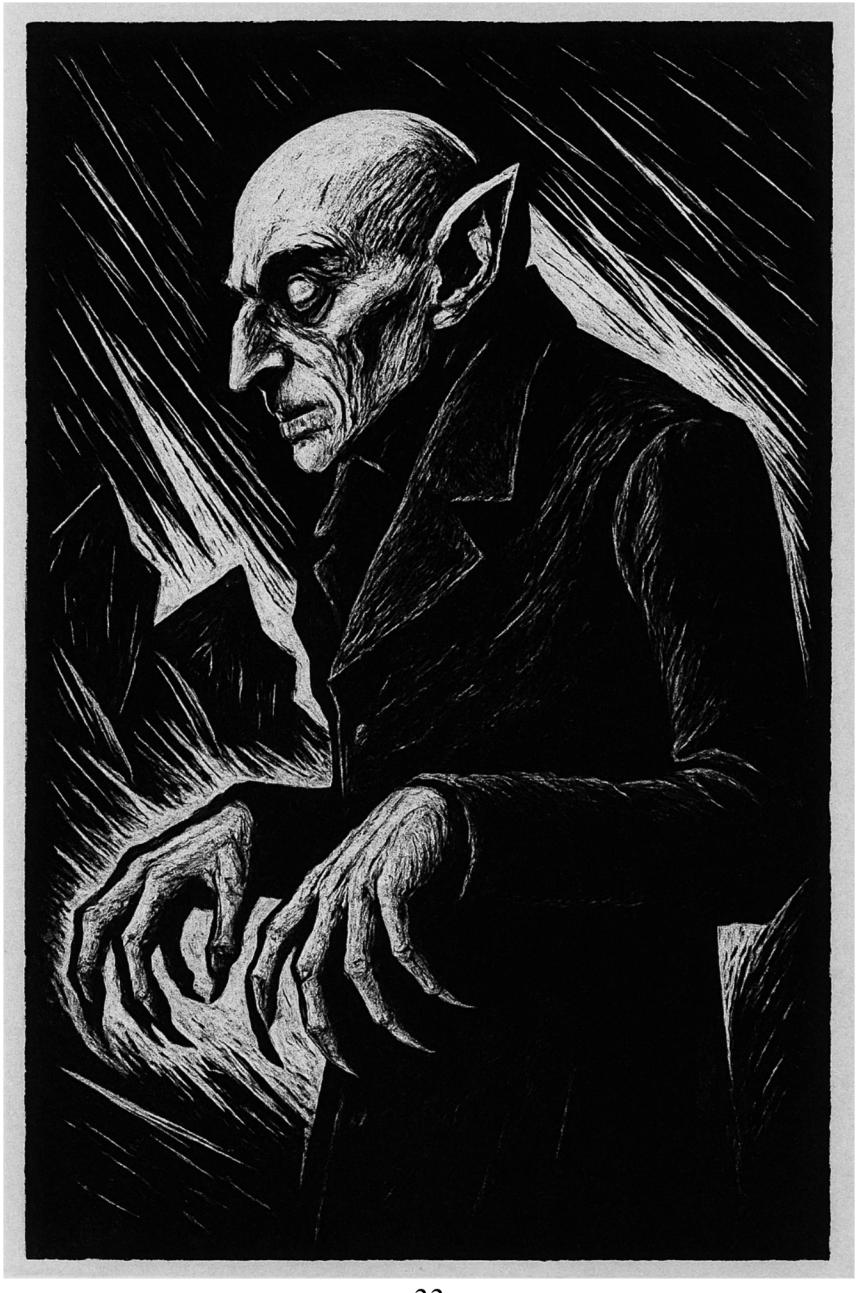
for a moment, then seemed to break out into a mask of delight. "I...know...of a way...to cure him...of his delusion. Is it not so?"

And all the assembled agreed that, indeed, it was.

Nosferatu

Adapted from the Screenplay by Henrik Galeen

Silent Scream



Preface

The author does not wish to go on and on at length as to his adaptation of *Nosferatu.* It was completed chiefly because it was impossible for him to do otherwise. It was a project too tempting, too perfect, too darkly enchanting NOT to eventually undertake. Though we have departed here and there from Herr Galeen's original script, we have remained, as it were, scrupulously faithful. Put down our departures to necessity, if you must, artistic lisence, at the very least.

Nosferatu (1922) is a film both horrifyingly stark and iconically brilliant; its images present a vampire tale out of the worst and most fearful, dire aspects of the Victorian imagination. The film's vampire, Orlok, unlike the suave, sexy Lugosi, or even later interpretations, is a rat-like, cadaverous, verminous living corpse; a silent film grotesque as mad and menacing as a literal reanimated cadaver. He carries death with him in his wake, a reverse Pied Piper of Hamlin, bringing the rats WITH him, instead of leading them (and finally the children) away. He seems to stink of must and mildew and rats and blood.

His eyes are ferocious and mad, and also insensate and sometimes even a little stupid. There is nothing robust, human, or remotely attractive about him. He is a stiff come back to repellent, parasitic, diseased life.

The rest, as they say, is simply a light and shadow show. (Or, rather, that is how Omar Khayyim termed it.)

And it is only a movie.

But it brings the gothic trope of the vampire to life in a way that has seldom ever been equaled. Actually never.

And we write this on Halloween.

And we wonder.

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--October 31st, 2019.

Act 1. The Awakening

> *Nosferatu! That name alone can chill the blood! Nosferatu! Was it he who brought the plaque to Wisborg in 1838? I have long sought the causes of that terrible epidemic, and found at its origin and its climax the innocent figures of Jonathon Hutter and his young wife Ellen."*
>
> --From *The Diary of Johann Cavillius*, notable historian of his native city of Wisborg.

Wisborg 1 8 3 8

It was morning, the daylight peeping above the trees as the handsome young Johnathan Hutter prepared himself in the mirror, carefully buttoning his collar, tieing his tie, and freshening his skin with a bit of cream before looking in the mirror to find himself, as they say, "quite presentable." His young wife Ellen was toying with the cat.

"Oh Johnathan," she said, running to him. "You must sit for a bit of breakfast. You need your strength."

He brushed her aside, perhaps a little too indelicately.

"Ellen! I have no time. Herr Knock has asked me to come to the office very early this morning, to discuss an important business arrangement! I don't have time to eat! I'll be late."

At hearing this, Ellen looked downcast. Then Hutter took her in his arms, and said, "I promise, I'll be back for lunch, and we'll eat together this afternoon. Alright?"

She looked up at him, seeming a little tearful, but said, "Alright."

"Good!" And, with that, he kissed her on the chin and slipped out the door. He was gone.

The sun was beaming brightly on the streets of Wisborg, the odd little town whose cobbled streets and alleyways, old houses hinting at Dutch windmills and wooden bridges and gentle wharves, all bespoke a charm that was old and picturesque; like the seamed and worn face of a beautiful painting, perhaps.

Johnathan Hutter liked the clop-clop of hooves on the cobbles, the rattle of wheels, the friendly faces of his fellow townsfolk, one of whom, an aged and seamed old man who seemed to have been alive for time out of mind, came forth and greeted him.

"Mornin' Master Hutter!" he said, grabbing the hand and doffing the hat. Johnathan smiled, returned the greeting.

"But you must slow down, young man. You cannot outrun your fate!"

Johnathan thought this a peculiar thing for the old man to say but smiled nonetheless.

Finally, the old man (who possessed an uncanny strength, it seemed) let go, and Johnathan proceeded on his way.

Upon rounding a corner he spied the wooden sign that said: *Knock and Sons, Solicitors.* It was his present place of employment.

Hutter looked through the window in the door. Inside, Knock sniveled and giggled as he held the letter clenched in his grubby, ink-stained hands. Hutter entered, dusting off his boots, and climbed the rickety stair upward to the landing where the huge, heavy, dusty law books and other worm-eaten old volumes were kept.

"Ah, if only walls could speak!" thought Johnathan, merrily. "What would such walls say?"

He didn't truly know. But he apprised his superior Knock with a wary, if not particularly prejudiced eye. "After all," Jonathan was always saying to himself, "a man may have his eccentricities, but that doesn't neccessarily make him a bad man!"

Sunlight gleamed in through the window, sending up eddies and swirling moats of dust in the air.

Knock said, "Here is an important letter from Transylvania. Count Orlok wishes to buy a house in our city. It's a good opportunity for you, Hutter. The Count is rich and free with his money. You will have a marvelous journey. And, young as you are, what matter if it costs you some pain--or even a little blood? The house facing yours, that should suit him. Leave at once, my young friend. And don't be frightened if people speak of Transylvania as the land of phantoms!"

The land of phantoms! thought Johnathan, with a slight tremor in his bones. Did such a place actually exist? He thought of Transylvania as an exotic storybook land, a place bordering the world of the Turk, a gateway wherein Europe, and the Orient met and blended. Land of phantoms, indeed!

That night, Hutter was attempting to console Ellen as to the fact that he had a long, arduous journey to make.

"I may be away for several weeks, Ellen," Johnathan said, eating his dinner while Ellen, absently, played with the cat.

"Knock is sending me to some lost corner of the Carpathians."

At hearing this, she seemed troubled.

"Oh, Johnathan, why must you go? I become so worried when Knock sends you on these long excursions. You know how lonely I get when we are forced to be apart, how I long for your face when I am gone!"

"I will be fine! We will see each other again soon enough! Now, settle down, you will be fine staying with the Hardings while I am away."

Ellen pleaded, "Oh, Jonathan, must you go?"

Hutter tried to be understanding of her fear, but felt a little as if he were losing his patience, nonetheless.

"Yes, of course, I must! It's my livelihood! We must have a dependable income upon which to live. Why an opportunity like this could really advance my career! Now, let us finish dinner; relax and forget all about it for tonight! I will leave in the morning."

But, he knew she could not forget. And, truthfully, neither could he.

That next morning, he helped Ellen mount the back of his horse, and together they rode to the home of the Hardings.

The Hardings were old friends of Ellen. Very well-to-do they were, a prominent family, and they had loved Ellen since she was but a young girl. Annie and Ellen had always been such close friends, and now, with Ellen married, it became more and more

difficult for the two women to conspire to spend time together. Except, of course, for the odd tea or luncheon.

Hutter was not long in conversing, but Mister Harding took him aside and said, "Ellen tells us you are going far, Johnathan. To the wilds of the Carpathians, in fact. I tell you: that is a very mysterious and even dangerous country. You must be cautious. Here--"

And Mr. Harding held forth an old flintlock pistol. But Hutter wouldn't hear of it.

"Oh, I shall not be needing that old thing! I mean, I thank you kindly, but, I'm certain I'll be safe enough aboard the stagecoach."

Mr. Harding looked a little embarrassed, or downcast, perhaps, but asked, "Where is it you are going?"

"To Transylvania," replied Hutter, cheerily enough. "To meet Graff Orlok. He wants to buy a house in Bremen."

Mr. Harding said, "Take it with you anyway, my friend!" And so Johnathan did, although he was not even certain a gun so old would still fire.

It was not very long before Johnathan was ready to ride out. Ellen, who had been lurking in the yard, rushed out to meet him.

She clasped him in her arms, as Annie watched from the doorway, dabbing her eyes with a silk kerchief.

"Oh, Johnathan!" cried Ellen. 'I'll miss you so much! Do be safe, and come home soon. Write to me!"

"I will, Ellen! I promise!" And, with that, Johnathan Hutter rode away, into the rising sun.

T R A N S Y L V A N I A?

Transylvania seemed a wild, mountainous country when seen from the dusty, rattling coach; a place of the rocky precipice, deep, black forest, and gulf-like ravines that seemed to dip through the dark nightshade specter of Hades. Above, the star-strewn sky saw it all with wonder.

Along the road, rotting barns that must have been ancient before Johnathan's great-great-grandmother was born, abutted weed-choked fields, shared terrain with the rocky ruins of old keeps. Along the way, picturesque peasants in huge pants, white shirts, and black, nail-studded boots, with belts of red stripe and hungry, lean, weather-stained faces, led carts pulled by loafing oxen and skeletal nag.

"It's like a scene from a storybook!" said Hutter to the driver, in almost wonder. Predictably, the driver said nothing.

It was not long before they disembarked at a little village Inn.

"Driver," said Hutter. "No need to take my bags down. I'm going on to Borgo Pass. In the morning."

The driver looked down from his seat as if to say, "You are a madman, my friend! Or a fool. Or both." But did as he was told. Johnathan, famished from his long journey, went into the Inn.

The inside was dark and dank and smelled of must and spilled beer, pipe smoke, and greasy food. Except for a few old villagers playing cards at a table, the place seemed deserted.

He waited and waited. There was, seemingly, no one to wait on him. Finally, he slapped the table with his open palm.

"Dinner, quickly!"

Worried faces bobbed at the end of withered old necks. Beady eyes seemed to look troubled, furtive glances at him. The fat man, the innkeeper, came out from the kitchen, finally, wiping his hands on his apron.

"Where," he asked, "did you specifically say you were going, sir?"

"Why," answered Hutter, curiously, "to Count Orlok's castle in the mountains. I have important business there."

At this, the innkeeper seemed to be aghast.

"You must not leave now! The evil spirits become all-powerful after dark!" the man said, with a raised hand of trepidation.

Johnathan merely laughed.

"Why, nonsense," he said, dismissively. "Why, that's just silly old superstitious nonsense, my friend!"

But the innkeeper was firm in his disapproval.

"Do you know what tonight is, sir? The night of all nights--Walpurgisnacht!"

Hutter, certain that he had never before heard such a curious word, tilted his head quizzically and said: "Walpurgisnacht? Why, what on earth does that mean?"

To which the innkeeper replied, "It is the most evil of nights, the most unholy night of the year! It is a night when the Devil and his children walk the earth in human form. And there are witches, and vampires, too!"

Hutter felt quite certain the man was mad. But, he said to himself, these old peasant folk were steeped in superstitious nonsense.

He said, "Why, my good man, this is the Nineteenth Century, surely you don't mean to tell me you believe in all that sort of rubbish?"

Then the man's wife came forward. She took a crucifix from around her neck, and, muttering a prayer in her native tongue, placed it around Hutter's neck, kissing it first.

She tried to speak a few words of German, but all he could make out was, "For your Mama."

And then she said five words that he clearly DID understand:

"Denn die Toten rieten shnell."

("For the dead travel fast.")

For the dead travel fast.

Now, what on earth did she mean by that?

***

Having finally dined (on a curious few dishes, one some sort of chicken with paprika, which made him very thirsty), Hutter went to his room, made a hasty toilet, and was about to crawl into bed when he saw a huge old book left on the bedside table. Unaccountably, it was in German.

The title was: *The Book of the Vampires.* Or, some such nonsense. Becoming curious, he opened it up and began to read.

> *"...and it was in 1443 that the first Nosferatu was born. That name rings like the cry of a bird of prey. Never speak it aloud... Men do not always recognize the dangers that beasts can sense at certain times."*

He read for a bit more, smiling, shushing away his creeping anxiety (sure, after all, it was simply the result of sleeping in a strange bed, in a strange room, in an even stranger country); and,

telling himself that it was all, after all, a "good lot of rubbish," he put the book down, put out the candle, and settled down to try and sleep. He had a big day tomorrow.

Outside, unbeknownst to him, the mean and creeping things of the night slithered and crawled beneath his window, and a hyena howled in the dark, startling the horses, as old wives cowered behind bolted doors, holding their crucifixes and rosaries and muttering older, pagan incantations against the evils in the gathering gloom.

***

The drive through the mountains was dusty and dirty and long, and seemed treacherous, passing on roads leading up over dangerous cliffs that fell, far below, to crushing rocky depths.

Hutter looked with a growing sense of unease out the window of the coach as the scenery, the deep, limitless forests of trees, swept by in the twilight of this weird, forgotten land. Already, long shafts of deep sundown penetrated the trees, and Hutter could feel the spectral touch of a forgotten world invade his soul like the cold, lonely chill of death. He shuddered.

Beside him, a passenger who was dressed in a shabby suit, who may have been some middling government bureaucrat Johnathan guessed, leaned from the coach window and snapped at the driver, "Hurry! The sun will soon be setting."

Indeed, thought Hutter, again having the feeling of uneasiness, of feeling as if, somehow, he was in danger of being "lost." He hoped and prayed there would be a hearty repast, also, when he finally arrived at the castle. He was now famished.

And good drink as well, he thought. I could use a snifter of brandy.

It was at a place called the Borgo Pass where the driver stopped, reigning in the horses.

Bending down to peer in at his passengers, he stated, "We will go no further, sir! Not for a fortune! We will go no further. Here begins the land of the phantoms."

And, quite abruptly, he threw down Hutter's luggage.

It landed in the dirt, and Hutter, much perturbed, dove forward to pick it up.

"Well, so I see this is how they treat foreigners in this strange, godforsaken backwater!"

But, as the coach drove away, madly, Hutter could see that calling this place a "backwater" could hardly be assessed as an accurate description. This was no little rural burg; this was a mountainous wilderness.

Ahead, the pathway ran into a wooden bridge. Hutter walked to it, crossed, not liking the creak of rotting wood beneath his boots. The whole thing might come to pieces at any time.

He knew the Count had promised to send his coach on the old road leading through Borgo Pass. Where, in God's name, was the driver? He began to feel fear--real, true fear--at the idea of being abandoned on a rocky mountainous crag, in a wilderness teeming with predators, to freeze to death, or be devoured in the night by wolves. The panic began to grip his heart, and he thought only of his own dear, sweet Ellen, so far away, in the warmth and comfort of their home.

Act 2.

"And When He Had Crossed the Bridge, the Phantoms Came to Meet Him!"

He felt like weeping, began to pray. "Oh Lord," he said, "please let me live to return home so that I might hold my dear, sweet Ellen in my arms once more." He fell to dark, troubling thoughts of what she would do if something should happen to him. Would she, herself, survive the burden of grief? He didn't know. Then, suddenly--

Yes! It was the rattle and clatter of a coach and horses! He put his hand across his brow, to block out the sun. Coming, as if driven by hellish fury, was a coach. Undoubtedly this was Count Orlok's coach! He had kept his promise! Hutter breathed a sigh of relief, felt his fears grow diminished.

The coach pulled up beside him. The driver was a man in a peaked cap and huge coat, the collar pulled around his face, the face hidden by the pointed brim (the cap seemed an old-fashioned thing, with the plume of a feather in the bill; in fact, the driver seemed to be dressed as if he had stepped from, perhaps, a century back), pointed forward, his whip hand shooting straight; indicating, without words, that they were driving forward to the castle. Hutter quickly grabbed his bags, and, with some difficulty, placed them inside. Then, he ascended himself into the coach. And, like lightning, they were away.

It was a ride through the wildest country he had yet seen, going up rocky mountain roads, past beetling precipices, perched over yawning canyons that seemed to lead into Hell itself. And the sun was setting.

Around him, he could hear the howl of wolves, see the weird, fiery glow emitted like phosphorescence from deep within the black well of the ancient trees.

"That glow. Driver? What causes that strange glow?" Hutter looked into the night at what seemed to be a weird, dancing circle of flame.

The driver did not answer, but, instead stopped the coach along the mountain pass. Then, flying into the forest beyond, he was gone for what seemed an interminable time. Hutter began to be worried again; but, just then, the strange, silent figure returned, illuminated by the light of a pale, unholy moon, and returned to his perch atop the coach.

Hutter was puzzled by the whole thing. But, it was not many moments later that the most frightening event yet transpired.

Hutter was shaken from a half-dreaming state by the crack of the whip, the startled sound of the horses rearing back, and the curses, in Hungarian, of the driver.

Hutter looked from the coach, his blood suddenly running cold. Black, dog-like shapes, with burning eyes, were circling in the midst of the forest pathway. Hutter could see that they were wolves.

And even by the light of the moon, he could see their deadly white jaws slavering, drooling, and he knew how dangerously hungry they were.

Hutter felt his heart leap to his throat. He could hear the driver snarl and curse. The whip cracked, the horses neighed; Hutter wished, quite badly, for this whole ordeal to end.

Simply getting to the castle had been a nightmare thus far! he thought madly. What else can happen? Now, he thought, it is as if we are done for!

But, just then, an unaccountable thing occurred. The vicious, slavering wolf pack seemed to whimper and retreat, slowly, then disappeared with great rapidity into the trees. The coachman cracked his whip at the horses, and the slow, rattling vehicle began to creep forward, finally plunging ahead again at the same breakneck speed.

I would not have believed it possible! Hutter thought to himself. But he realized that the coachman must have been used to such occurrences, and he felt he could relax a little, as he was in capable hands.

Then, after having been lulled asleep by the incessant rocking motion and his own bone-deep weariness, Hutter came awake when the coachman finally barked, "We are almost there, young master!"

Hutter sat up. Out the window, gleaming in the spectral moonlight, Hutter got his first glimpse of Castle Orlok.

It was a monstrous, ruined, jagged tooth, set in the rotting gums of jutting rock and sparse tree surrounding it. Vast, with dark eyeless windows and ruined battlements, it was the very picture of desolation and gloom. Was it a ruin?

How thought Hutter, could anyone possibly live here?

The coach drove up the winding road toward the drawbridge. Hutter hoped they could cross the rotting thing without falling through.

They clattered over the creaking boards, and then into the mouth of a courtyard, the horses clomping over the cobbles. A single torch burned at an arched entrance.

"Now, you may get out." said the driver. Hutter did so, reaching in to claim his bags.

The coach drove off quickly, disappearing into what appeared to be a tunnel beneath the wall. Hutter found himself alone, lost; afraid again. The long entryway was pitch dark. He could see nothing, but he went forward slowly.

Then, a yellowish gleam in the dark. Someone was indeed coming forward in the black! Was it the Count?

Indeed it was.

But, from the first time Hutter laid eyes upon this strange personage, he regretted ever having set foot upon the soil of that accursed land, as the figure he saw seemed to be a cadaverous phantom, come straight from the bowels of some dark, horrible dream.

The figure that came forward in the black was exceedingly tall, and cadaverous thin as if he was a figure that had been deliberately starved to skin and bones. His long arms and long, thin, skeletal fingers ended in talons; nails that, seemingly, had never been clipped, and looked like the claws of some wild animal. The skin was a leprous, unhealthy pallor, looking more like the waxen skin of some dead man.

The head was bald, the face exceedingly long and thin and narrow, with high cheekbones ending at a pointed chin, and a simply enormous, sloping nose that curved downward over a cruel, disfigured, rat-like mouth, bearing two razor-sharp front teeth that jutted over thick, pouting lips.

The brows were bushy punctuation. But it was the eyes that were worst of all, hideous twin orbs of emptiness that seemed to project phantom rays upon whatever object they fell. Altogether, Hutter was certain he had never before seen such a ghastly, nightmarish character in all of his born days. It was like an ogre from a storybook, come to life.

Even more peculiar, the Count's clothing seemed long out of date, the coat being something a boyar might have worn a century back.

The Count approached him, and Hutter found himself instinctively reeling back.

Count Orlok said, "You are late, young man. It is almost midnight. My servants have all retired."

Hutter had no reply to this, so simply nodded, his eyes going wide to peer at the Count. The Count simply flicked one of his immensely long, talon-like nails, and Hutter, understanding, followed him with growing anxiety into the mouth of the dark entryway. For the time being, he was "home."

The Count lead Hutter through the ruined corridors of his ancient, crumbling keep, past the huge central staircase, which was completely covered in front by a massive web, and down a darkened hall, where, at a decrepit wooden door, the Count stopped, extracted a pair of rattling iron keys, and, unlocking the rusted lock, invited Hutter to enter and seat himself by the fire.

"Enter freely, of your own will," said Count Orlok, "and leave some of the happiness you bring!"

Hutter did just that, taking off his hat and going to the table. Upon it stood a silver tray, a loaf, cheese, a bottle of rare wine

and a silver goblet. A warm, inviting fire burned in the massive grate.

Hutter took the lid from the tray. A massive flank of beef, sitting amid a swamp of potatoes and other vegetables, wafted a rare and delicious aroma up to his nostrils. Famished, he fell to eating.

Picking up the loaf, he began to slice. Suddenly--

"Ouch!"

He managed to cut his thumb, somehow, on the blade.

The Count, who had been hovering over the table with a weird, vulpine, frozen smile, instantly seemed to grow fiercely intense, looking as if his eyes were aflame.

His long, skinny, claw-like fingers froze, like gnarled, living branches before him, and he hissed between his rat-like little teeth, "Blood! Your precious blood!"

Hutter found the Count's behavior rather unnerving. He shrank back a little, though still seated; and, inadvertently, the beaded rosary necklace the old woman at the Village Inn had given him fell out from around his collar. Exposed, the Count seemingly did not like to see it.

He turned his skeletal face to the wall, hissing again, his eyes narrowing to angry slits. Hutter felt a moment of confused panic; he did not know if he was going to have the nerve to stay with this strange man the entire night.

Count Orlok said, "Let us chat together a moment, my friend. There are still several hours until dawn, and I have the whole day...to sleep."

Hutter ate the remainder of his food, but more slowly now; reflectively. He felt his appetite had slipped a little.

The Count spent much of the night regaling Hutter with tales of his ancestral homeland, the derring-do, bloody battles, and adventures of his forebears, their struggle fending off the advances of the Turks into Christian Europe. Of battles fought and won with cruel sadism, torture, and even living impalements.

"What witch or devil was ever so powerful as Attila, whose blood flows through these veins? Ah, but the victories of my ancestors are now but a tale to be told."

The Count seemed when he spoke thus, far away as if his mind were somehow actually reliving events he was merely separated from by the gulf of time.

It is not as if he is remembering stories, thought Hutter, but recalling events as if he had actually been there and lived them. Most curious.

Hutter found himself finally giving way to slumber, after having fought to stay awake, even as Graff Orlok's voice droned on and on.

***

It was many hours later, with the sun pouring in through the window, the fire in the huge stone fireplace having gone out, that Hutter roused himself from a night of uneasy, half-remembered dreams.

It had all been blood and pain, battles, and carrion dogs chasing death across a war-torn, ancient landscape. And, at the center of it all, Hutter had seen a face, looking curiously like that of Graff Orlok, and having two burning, wolf-like, demonic eyes.

He got up slowly from the seat, his body aching, his head swimming with tales of bloody battles and half-forgotten bad dreams, and began to look around the room. Going to a wardrobe and throwing it open, he found that his clothing had all been brushed and hung very neatly for him. His belongings had been laid on the end table beside the sprawling bed with care. No doubt, Hutter at first thought, that the servants had been in while he slept in the chair. Then another thought began to trouble him.

He had actually seen no servants since he had been here. Count Orlok had greeted Hutter by himself at the door, and the only other man he had seen since departing the carriage at the Borgo Pass was the Count's weird driver; and he had really not got a good look at that man, who had his collar and his pointed, peaked cap covering much of his face.

Hutter felt a shiver steal up his spine. He felt a little watery in his guts, a little lonely, and anxious.

He went out, managing to find his way to a great door, pulling it open and exiting into the bright, glaring sunlight, going out into the court, his boots echoing against the cracked cobbles. The bridge was down, apparently so that a few carts could pass onto the grounds. Hutter peered closely, using his hand to cover his eyes. Were those a band of gypsies driving those carts? He was uncertain. If so, what could Count Orlok possibly want with them? Were they being utilized for manual labor? It seemed weirdly unlikely.

Hutter continued to explore the grounds, walking into the garden, which was in as much decay and disrepair as everywhere else in the Castle. The ground was choked with weeds, the herbage a weird mutation of ugly growth and putrefaction.

Into the dark of the trees Hutter went, and down the hill to the river below. Overlooking it, an ancient gazebo with a tottering roof seemed to offer an inviting view. It was here, too, where he could write his letter.

He sat, and taking out a scrap of paper and pencil, composed:

"Ellen, my beloved-

Don't be unhappy. Though I am far away, I love you. This is a strange country. After my first night in the castle, I found two large bites on my neck. From mosquitoes? From spiders? I don't know. I have had some frightful dreams, but they were only dreams. You mustn't worry about me. I am leaving immediately to return to Bremen--and to you."

He sat up from his exertion. Before him, the river rushed on, glistening in the dying sunlight, smelling of the wet and rot of fish, the murk of the water. The wind blew, like the breath of a child, through the trees. He suddenly wondered: How, on earth, am I to mail this?

He thrust the letter into his pocket. He proceeded from the gazebo, down the path, and back through the trees, going down the sloping side of the hill, back toward the gated garden entrance.

Just then, he spied a man with a pack coming up the pathway toward him, a walking stick in his hand. Evidently, an explorer.

As Hutter got close, he realized that the man, who wore bright, colorful clothing, and whose skin had a sun-blasted look, was indeed, a gypsy.

Hutter waved toward the man and hurried toward him, waving his letter in his hand.

Approaching him, he could see that the man smiled, was missing a few teeth, but seemed, beneath his great mustache, pleasant enough. He spoke very poor German, and Hutter for a few moments was at a loss as to how to communicate with him what he desired.

Finally, he seemed to make him understand that he wished for him to mail his letter to Ellen when next he was in town.

"Ah! Mail your letter. Yes sir! On my honor!"

Finally, feeling somewhat mollified (but still realizing there was a chance Ellen would never see it), Hutter returned through the garden gate to the castle, a little lighter of step, but still, for all of that, feeling the gathering gloom of his life.

Going through the ancient corridors, Hutter reflected:

Once, not long ago, in the streets of Wisborg, an old man stopped me to shake my hand. He told me, "Not so fast, young man! You cannot escape your fate!"

You cannot escape your fate.

Now, what did he mean by that?

Hutter gradually felt the creeping gloom turn into cold anxiety. He walked back through the desolate, crumbling halls, past the moth-eaten tapestries and faded portraits, to his room. Where was the Count?

"I have all day to sleep. Like the dead." he had told Hutter.

He felt an icy claw grip his spine.

***

As twilight came on, the castle became alive with menacing shadows.

Quite a satisfactory dinner had been laid out before him on the table. Roast chicken done up some way that was very good but made him thirsty.

"Paprika," he said to himself. "The thing is cooked in paprika."

There was also some dish with corn, like pudding, and bread, wine and cheese. A hearty salad topped it off.

Finally, there was also coffee and biscuits.

He skipped the biscuits, but the coffee was very rich and good. "Much appreciated, my dear Count," he laughed to himself, and, stretching back on a couch, decided to read a little. It was from the *Book of the Vampires*, of course, which he had absconded with before leaving the little village Inn.

My, it seems as if that was long ago, instead of just the other night!

Hutter picked the dusty old volume up, opened at random, began, again, to read:

"...Nosferatu drinks the blood of the young, the blood necessary to his own existence. One can recognize the mark of the vampire by the trace of his fangs on the victim's throat."

It was ghastly, chilling stuff. Gradually, Hutter got the feeling that he was not alone. He got up from the couch, went to the door of the bedroom, opened it.

It took his eyes a few moments to make out the figure of Count Orlok in the gloomy corridor outside, but, when he did, he found the image of the man was still startling. The long, cadaverous form came toward him in the gloom.

"I thought," began the long, rat-like face, hissing out from between his pointed, sharp little teeth, "that we might...go over...the details of my new home."

"Why yes," Hutter said, although just a little hesitantly. "Certainly, Count. That would be a pleasure."

Secretly, Hutter thought, Yes, and the sooner I can get this over with, and be on my way home, the better!

Hutter sat with Count Orlok at the table where he had just eaten.

"Oh, forgive me,"the Count began. "But, my servants have already...retired...for the evening. They will...be in...to clear away these dishes...in the morning. While you are still...asleep."

Hutter smiled nervously. "Yes, well, I don't believe I've caught hide nor hair of them since I first arrived yesterday. You must keep them...awfully busy, Count. Although," he reflected, not sure if he should tell the Count about the man he had handed over his letter to Ellen to earlier, "I did meet a man, a gypsy I think, while out this morning, taking the breeze."

The Count smiled a hideous, icy smile, his eyes blazing. He said, "Yes, Herr Hutter. The gypsies have been...very useful to me. As help on the grounds and these old buildings...which often need...repair. Now,"

And the Count grabbed up the title deed to his new home in Wisborg, examining the document with his blazing, piercing and somehow frightening gaze, using his immensely long nails to trace every written line.

After this, he noticed that Hutter had left a locket open upon the table. Inside, was a picture of Ellen. The Count seemed to

take a special delight in this, his lean face cracking into a more terrible grin than any Hutter had yet seen.

"Is this your wife? What a lovely throat! That old mansion seems quite satisfactory. We shall be neighbors."

A menacing shadow in a classic scene.

Oh wonderful, thought Hutter. Just the thing I've always wanted! Ellen, I'm certain, shall be thrilled!

Then he thought, How strangely he put that! What a lovely throat? What could he mean by that?

Again, he found himself filled with uneasiness.

***

Far away, across the wild mountains of Transylvania, in little, quaint, quiet and darkened Wisborg, Ellen, Hutter's wife, stirred in her sleep.

The moonlight poured in through the sash on her milk-white face, which was now contorted in terror. Annie, dear, sweet Annie, slept beside her.

In her dreaming mind, Ellen could see Johnathan, writhing in terror, while a long dark shadow with thin arms and claw-like horrid fingers, crept up a stair.

Oh! Hutter awoke with a start, his face twisting into a look of shocked terror, as his arms flew above his head, striking the wall behind the bed. Then she saw the dark shadow, the horrid form of the face of It.

It was hideous! Like a long, lean, dead man come back to life! A maniacal, mad, wolf-like gaze, sharp little teeth, and burning eyes. The long, pointed ears of a rat.

And a hellish, demoniacal spell cast from the cursed, blazing sockets of its deep, black orbs!

A word:

Nosfer...nosfer...nosfera...

Her trembling lips mouthed these accursed syllables, while she tossed and turned in her nightmarish fear. Soon Annie was awakened. Turning over, she saw, with horror, that Ellen had bit her lip.

She tried to shake her writhing friend awake. But Ellen seemed to be almost insensate as if she were in a death-like trance.

She mouthed the name, Johnathan! Oh, Johnathan. It was then that Ellen did the thing that Annie most had feared.

She arose from the bed they shared and began to sleepwalk across the room. Annie, knowing that it could be dangerous to wake her at this point (she had slept in the same bed with Ellen before, when she had also sleepwalked and had been warned when still a girl never to wake her friend), got up and followed on tiptoes.

The servant was in the hall, holding a candelabrum up.

When she saw what was happening, she said, in a whisper, "The Master is awake! He is in his study with the Doctor! I shall go and fetch him."

"Yes," whispered Annie back. "Please do so!"

And so she did. In a short amount of time, Ruth's father and Dr Bulwer had both assembled in the hall, and, whispering to each other, and exchanging glances, had commenced following Ellen as she made her way out to the terrace.

Walking along the edge, the three followers feared she might fall far, a frightening prospect of her hurting herself.

Above, Annie gasped to see Ellen framed against the moonlit clouds, her hands thrust out in front of her. Her dainty, white feet slipped along the cold, marble edge of the terrace balustrade. Mr. Harding could see that she was about to fall.

For a terrible moment, the men did not know which way the slipping Ellen would fall, either into their arms or, quite possibly...to her death in the garden below.

He and Dr. Bulwer raced forward, just in time to catch her in their grasps. Of course, this was after Mr. Harding reached up with one of his great hands, like a bear claw made of scuffed leather, and grabbed Ellen by her robe.

She was saved from herself. For the time being.

Annie had started to scream when she saw Ellen slip, but the scream had caught in her throat. The men took Ellen back to their room. Dr. Bulwer pronounced that it must have been due to a "sudden fever."

***

Doctor Bulwer would later write:

> *"Since then I have learned that she had sensed the menace of Nosferatu that very night. And Hutter, far away, had heard her cries of warning."*

Far away, through the wild and dark forests of the Carpathians, in a wretched, crumbling castle perched atop a beetling precipice, Hutter had reared back on his bed, throwing his hands above his head in terror, as a pale, deathly skull-like face with burning eyes glared down upon him. The face bore the unmistakable look of ravenous hunger, an insensible, almost

idiotic madness. But those fiery eyes, beneath the bushy, long brows--those eyes froze his blood with hypnotic fear.

The being bent low, his long, talon-like nails creating icy rivulets of fear where they touched Hutter's flesh; the searing pain of a bite on the neck rendered Hutter a limp, broken thing, fainting in the deep well of darkness as he lost consciousness.

The lean, skeletal figure, no longer hungry, turned and, slowly, with the legs of a man returned from the grave, exited the room for the night. The door closed behind him as he went.

***

Slowly, the next morning, the world came back to focus for Hutter. His hands at first went to his head, which felt as if it was big with drink, or that he had been, perhaps, beaten around the temples the night before.

It was throbbing. Then, his hand went to the side of his neck. Ouch--

More bites, he knew. His mind remembered a burning, skull-like visage, a tall, skeletal, human rodent, with Satanic eyes. Orlok.

Hutter stumbled from the couch whereon he reposed, and proceded out the door, stumbling down the darkened corridor. One thing he knew for certain: Graff Orlok would be asleep. The man himself said he slept by day, had he not?

Feeling some inner compulsion, Hutter made his slow, painful, but increasingly quickening way down the dark hall, to the door wherein he had made an exit to the courtyard and outside, yesterday.

He went out into the light, suddenly feeling dizzy, nauseous. No matter, he must continue. He had a strange, dream-like

feeling about him, almost as if he were in a trance. He began to explore the court, coming to various doors. Where, he wondered, was the chapel?

He finally found a door marked by an ancient symbol, but not one he recognized. Ah! he felt this must be a place of importance.

He put his hand out to touch the door. He felt a bolt of electricity move through his arm, as he swung it open to descend a short flight of stone steps.

What, was this some sort of crypt? He wondered. He pulled the heavy webs covering the entrance down, choked a bit at the clouds of dust. The smells down here were of trapped air, mold, and turned earth and...decay? It was an awful smell, and, as Hutter descended the steps the rest of the way, looking at the dark, massed boxes below, just able to see them by the trickling light pouring in from above, he knew that, yes, indeed, this WAS the Orlok family crypt.

***

He continued down, still feeling as if he were simply having a dream. Before him, he saw a coffin that looked as if the top half of it would pull back to reveal the body within.

He went forward. He hesitated a moment, before leaping to action, his mind seeming detached from the movements of his physical form. It took his eyes a moment to adjust to the vision within, to see it, and to, truly, believe what he was seeing.

"No," he said to himself, "it can't be! Why it isn't possible!"

Hutter clutched his heaving chest, falling backward as an icy bolt of shock left him reeling. He began to retreat backward, not able to take his eyes off the coffin and its lone occupant.

No mistaking it: the thin, pointed chin, sharp little teeth, bald pate, hellish eyes beneath shaggy brows; the long, sloping nose, the deathly, almost grey pallor.

Orlok.

"Graff Orlok. Why the man is..."

But Hutter found himself reeling backward in terror from that accursed face.

***

Taking himself back to his room, he threw himself upon the bed in nervous exhaustion. Despite his feeling of fear and terror, he found that exhaustion overwhelmed him; that, with his face buried in the pillow, he could not help but yield to the sweet, soothing nepenthe in sleep, the "balm in Gilead."

But, when he awakened, he found that it was a mistake to let himself go to sleep, to be off guard in the presence of such a fiend. He should have predicted, he chastised himself.

For, now, he was locked in his room, a prisoner in the castle.

***

Going to the window, peering outside, in the court, he could hear the voices of men moving heavy boxes. The Count's gypsies.

They piled the oblong boxes--coffins, Hutter reminded himself--atop a flatbed, and then, drove off slowly. Hutter realized this was how the Count was traveling to the new home in Wisborg that Hutter himself had secured for him.

"Going to plague my fellow countrymen!" Hutter cursed the Count and cursed himself for helping him to escape this undead tomb.

Nosferatu. Yes, that was what the count, indeed, was. Nosferatu! A...A...

VAMPIRE.

Hutter knew the idea to be absurd. Vampires were supposed to only exist in old legends, in books of fable--not in the real world of solid, living men, of business commerce and cold, hard scientific reality. Yet, he had seem the Count, with his own eyes, sleeping in a coffin, looking, for all the world, like a corpse that had been stripped of animation and life. It had to be true. Must be true!

And Count Graff Orlok, the hateful demon that he was, was in route to Hutter's hometown. A pang of fear seized his heart, and a cold sweat poured forth. He saw a gentle, beautiful, sweet face swim up in his mind, playing with a kitten, a ball of yarn.

Ellen. What if he went for Ellen?

Hutter knew that if he tarried long, he would starve, locked away in that grim, crumbling, forboding keep, just as certainly as if it had been a dungeon. What to do? What to do?

He paced frantically, wanting to rip his hair out. The castle room in which he was a prisoner was high up--if a man fell from this height, he would break every bone in his body. Below was a cobbled court.

Still, he must try something, anything. If he remained here, he was as good as dead anyway.

He then spied the sheets of his bed. He went to the bed, began to frantically tear apart the sheets, fashioning them into a rope.

***

Meanwhile, headed downriver, a large raft, manned by dusty gypsy men, made its way to the city of Sigusura, not twenty leagues distant. Upon the raft, those large boxes of earth from Orlok's castle were being transported.

***

It was only later, loading the Count's boxes on board the ship, that Hutter saw a vision of the hellish thing as it commenced.

He had come through the thickets of the forest, exhausted, trembling. He had been damned lucky he had not slipped from the side of the wall and plummeted below, breaking his neck. In desperation, he had tied the end of the rope made of sheets to the stout headboard of the heavy, ancient bed, had finally decided he must go out the window. And so, swallowing his fear, knowing that one false misstep or accident meant his doom, he had descended over the uneven, crumbling surface of the castle wall, holding tight to his homemade rope, careful to avoid the cobbled court that yawned below, beneath the sickening drop.

Finally, hanging from his outstretched arms, he had dared to let go, still too far from the ground to safely fall. But, he knew he had no choice.

Plummet he did, landing precariously on his boots, feeling the stones slam into his heels and send him reeling back, to fall heavily on his back, shielded only by his coat.

Had he broken anything? He could still, amazingly, move. He got up, dusting himself off. His breathing was heavy, fear was driving him forward. Could he survive a trek through this dark forest? What of wolves? Where could he possibly find help?

Unthinkingly, he began to run, his aching, but thankfully unbroken feet stumbling over the rough, uneven cobbles. He would follow the river. Of course, he might be eaten by wolves.

But, anything was better than dying locked inside Count Orlok's terrible crypt.

***

Hours later, as the sun dipped behind the trees, sending slanting beams of deep, fiery light cascading down, the majesty of the sunset only obscured by rocky, beetling precipice, Hutter, soaked in sweat and filth, exhausted, put his head up at the low, distant rumble of thunder. The sweet, soothing balm of nature, the rain, began to pour down softly upon the carpet of earth below, at first slowly, then, as the evening darkened, in ever-increasing great drops.

Before him, his weary eyes thought he could see, through the murk and rain...Yes! A glimmer of hope.

A house, a stone dwelling bearing the sign of the cross, which Hutter realized the Count must hate, was there in the black. And, mercy! It seemed there were lights burning within.

Hutter, slipping and sliding in the mud, ran forward, grabbing fistfuls of the soaked, muddy ground as the hill inclined sharply upward, dead leaves and wet grass slipping through his fingers along with the sodden clods.

Finally, he made it to the door of this place, fell to his knees, began to hammer and beat the rotting wood, which was carved with ornate gargoyles and images of Christ and the Apostles.

It seemed an interminably long period before the door was swung wide, and a single, solitary old crone, a nun, Hutter presumed, opened the door cautiously, holding a lantern.

Hutter put out his hands.

"Help me!" he intoned, before falling over in a faint, in the mud and murk at the doorway.

The sister crossed herself but went to call the other members of her order to help get this lost, wayward unfortunate indoors and out of the rain before he caught his death.

***

It was only that morning that the sick, coughing and wheezing Hutter, being spoon-fed broth by one of the sisters nursing him back to health, saw the vision of the boxes.

"Filled with earth! Boxes! The dirt of the grave! The dirt of the grave he sleeps in!"

Hutter raved in his delirium, the fever of exhaustion burning his brain. The sisters assumed it was only the fever making him rave so, discounting all that he said.

***

In a shipyard, many miles distant, preparing to embark on the short leg of a voyage to Wisborg Harbor, stout, sullen men unloaded boxes of "experimental earth" from the cart the old Gypsy man had driven up with.

"It's some sort of damned freight bound for a university I take it. Here--"

The men loaded the boxes onto a wheeled cart for easier transport. They were heavy, though, and, one slipped as they proceeded up the ramp to the cargo hold, the lid, which was not hammered together well, popping off,

The filthy, ghastly contents within came spilling out onto the dock.

"Here, look what you've done now," said one of the dockworkers. "It'll be our hides for this!"

But, just then, what he saw coming out from inside the crate stopped his voice in his throat. For, spilling out of the top of the box, along with the earth, were dozens of large furry horrors.

Gigantic brown vermin.

Hundreds of RATS.

"What do we do about that, then?" asked the dockworker, the cigar he was chomping falling from his lips. The other man shrugged his shoulders, said, "How on earth should I know? Just keep loading them, I suppose. After all, I guess every old tub has a few rats aboard. Stowaways."

***

At the same time, at the Medical University in Wisborg, Dr. Bulwer was giving a short course to a group of fascinated students.

"Ah, yes, gentleman. The most fascinating and strange species of life exist as co-habitants on this weird planet with us. Things fierce and cunning, even deadly. Many of them have cruel, sickening appetites. Some of them even subsist on...blood!"

And Dr. Bulwer bent over, a fly caught in the tweezers he held in his hand, moving sluggishly, perhaps realizing that the end of its tiny, insignificant life drew near.

Before the assembled students, a Venus Flytrap opened up its weird pseudo-face, its teeth-like ridged mouth taking the still-living fly in its jaws, devouring its sustenance greedily.

"Astonishing, isn't it, gentlemen? That plant is the vampire of the vegetable kingdom!"

***

In another part of town, enclosed behind wrought-iron gates, brooded the sanitarium of Dr. Sievers, who watched over the lunatic asylum--and also lived within, in reasonably comfortable quarters.

Sitting at his desk, going over business accounts, he was interrupted as an attendant came racing into the room, exclaiming, "That patient who was brought in yesterday has gone out of his mind!"

Dr. Sievers looked up from his paperwork, asked, "Really? How so?"

The attendant swallowed, looked a little queasy, and said, "Why, the fellow is capturing spiders and flies and the like!"

Dr. Sievers commented, "Really, is that all?"

To which the attendant replied, "No, sir, you don't understand. It isn't that he just captures them. Why he eats them! While they are still alive!"

Hm, considered Dr. Sievers. A zoophagous lunatic! Well, I suppose it was inevitable that one should eventually come our way.

Getting up, Dr. Sievers buttoned his coat, and said, "Well, I suppose I shall have to have a look at this man in person. Shall we?"

***

Herr Knock had undergone a radical transformation recently.

His once neat and tidy home, his office and study, became sordid dens of squalor, beyond even the housekeeper's ability to keep clean. He began to mumble to himself one day, then to rave

to himself when he thought no one was listening. He seldom went into work anymore, and he took to wandering the streets at all hours, mumbling to himself when not cursing others, or raving about his "master."

"Oh, the Master is coming, oh yes. He is on his way here now. And he has promised me, oh yes! Lives! Small lives; juicy little things. But, lives nonetheless! And then we shall see who has the last laugh, my dear friends and neighbors! Oh yes indeed, we shall see!"

His white hair grew wild and unkempt, he did not bathe, and seldom changed his dirty, threadbare, worn clothing. People began to avoid him on the street; children chased after him, threw stones, began taunting him as a madman. But, that was not the worst of it.

He refused all normal food, began eating the refuse of the gutters. Then...he progressed to flies, and spiders (which ate the flies). Finally, he was stopped by a manservant in the act of trying to devour a living rat.

"Mein Gott!" confessed the man later. "The thing would have chewed its way out of his stomach if he had even been able to get it down!"

Indeed.

It was then that the trip to Dr. Sievers's sanitarium seemed in order. Herr Knock, most knew, was now hopelessly mad, and would, most likely, never see the outside of the place again. Indeed, with his habit of devouring small, living animals, it was feared that, eventually, he might proceed to capture even larger prey.

"What," one person wondered, "will happen if he progresses to kidnapping infants?"

To forestall that, Herr Knock was locked away.

Now, Dr. Sievers stood before the man, and said, "Guten Tag, Herr Knock. Might we have a word with you?"

As if in answer, the weird, crouched figure on the old bunk, with the wild, flaming eyes and the shock of white hair fringing his bald pate, answered, "Blood! Blood!"

For a moment, Sievers found it hard to comprehend exactly what the round little madman was doing. He kept snapping at what seemed to be empty air. Then, the attendant said: "He does that all day, sir! Catches them flies and eats 'em right up. Why it's the most disgusting thing I ever saw! It's enough to put you off your food!"

It was just then that the weird, crouching little figure, who had been attempting to capture flies buzzing around his filthy, unkempt hair, bounded forward with a screech, grabbing at Dr. Sievers while the attendant rushed forward to grapple with the man and pull him off.

"Otto, hold him tightly! He will have to be placed in restraints!"

This of course meant the straightjacket; which, as the attendant knew, was more likely to drive a mad man madder. He reasoned to himself later, though: there's probably no help for it.

Elsewhere, Dr. Bulwer bent low over his microscope, surrounded by students. He said, "And now, gentlemen, here is another type of vampire: a polyp with claws...transparent, without substance, almost a phantom."

His assembled students did not know, but Bulwer was more than just a specialist on obscure diseases of the blood. He had

studied much in the lore and legendry of the occult, and he was convinced that there existed a species of human quite, quite apart from the ordinary, living breed of men. This accursed species, he knew, roamed in churchyards and cemeteries, under the dark of night, the moon their unearthly mistress. They could take the form of wolf or bat, or even mist, to disguise themselves--and they thirsted, eternally, for LIVING BLOOD.

Neither dead nor living, they were *sanguisuga* in the ancient tongue--undead monsters who preyed on living men.

"And, one day, I shall find one," swore Dr. Bulwer to himself, often striding around his office in the dark of night. "Oh yes, I swear it, one day I SHALL."

***

Day after lonesome day, Ellen sat amid the dunes, the sandy beach that ran down towards the water's edge. Here and there, crazly leaning old headstones still poked from the scrabbling, sandy surface, the ruins of a forgotten burying ground. The water looked as still and placid as a painted ocean, she knew. Oh, where was her husband? Why, she wondered, had he not written to her?

It was not many days, though, before she was delivered a message from the still-trembling hand of her friend, Annie.

"Oh, Ellen," she said, nearly to the point of tears, knowing how important this missive was to her dear, sweet friend. "Is it not wonderful? You have finally heard from Jonathan! Now, I know he shall be returning soon from his long journey, and will come back to you!"

Ellen read the letter herself, crumpling it in eager hands. But, having then read it, she found herself still troubled.

Annie asked, "Ellen, what is the matter? You still look so concerned!"

Ellen paused, uncertain of herself, before she replied, "The letter seems very strange! It is not at all like him! It, it's as if he is trying to tell me something, but does not have the words to do so. Oh, Annie, I am so afraid! So very, very afraid!"

And she collapsed into Annie's arms, sitting on the bench, weeping in frustration and fear.

***

Ellen did not know it, but far away, in the wild forests of the Carpathians, Johnathan Hutter was preparing to depart for home.

He was much thinner, and looked weary from his great troubles, but, as he groomed himself in front of the full-length mirror, he realized he was, finally, coming back to some semblance of himself.

One of the sisters brought him in a tray, and said, "Our driver...can take you... as far as Bukovina. From there...you can... book passage back home." Hutter noted her poor grasp of German. She stood behind him in the doorway.

Yes, he said to himself. And, thankfully, I can see her reflection in the mirror!

She took her rosary and crucifix from around her throat, came forward as he adjusted his tie. He turned, staring down into her old, seamed face at the wizened, black eyes.

She put the rosary around his neck.

And then she said:

"Denn die Toten rieten Shnell."

("For the dead travel fast.")

Before, he might have wondered at that silly phrase.

Not now.

***

Knock awoke in his cell, his miserable bones still aching from the hated, implacable grasp of the straitjacket. The attendants had made certain to come in at intervals, per the doctor's orders, to pour water from a pitcher across the thing; so that, as the jacket dried, the canvas became tighter and tighter, until it squeezed him in a torturous, death-like grip. This was said to be "therapeutic."

Finally, though, they had relented, and let him free. He could do little more, though, than crawl about like a worm on his hands and knees. From his dirty straw mattress to the slot in the door, wherein an attendant had slipped a tray of food. He went to it slowly, painfully, picked up the tray, and was surprised to find that a paper had been left beneath it. Excitedly, his weary eyes took in the headline, scanned the print.

He read:

NEW PLAGUE BAFFLES SCIENCE

> "A mysterious epidemic of the plague has broken out in eastern Europe in the port cities of the Black Sea, attacking principally the young and vigorous. Cause of the two bloody marks on the neck of each victim baffles the medical profession...."

Knock began to laugh, first in a small tittering fashion, then throwing back his great, white shaggy head, and letting go uproariously.

"The Master is coming! He is coming, soon! All will pay! Yes, all will pay!"

The little madman then considered.

"And I will be one that shall benefit greatly from his generosity."

***

The captain was tending to a sick man. His crew was slowly dying, right and left, and their bodies were then tossed overboard. This man, too, would surely soon be dead. The captain peered closely at his throat.

The man had the same curious two little bite-marks on the throat. "The bite of some diseased vermin!" the captain thought. Suddenly, in the shadows out of the corner of his eye, he saw a strange thing shift in the gloom.

It looked like a tall, cadaverous man, dressed entirely in black. The head was bald, the fingers long and claw-like, face a deathly pallor, and the black eyes seemed to blaze.

The captain caught all of this in a moment, and it chilled his blood.

He climbed the ladder back to the deck of the ship, his legs feeling as if they were made of rubber.

It was not long after that he and his first mate, having sewed the last crew member into a canvas shroud, tossed the body of the man overboard. The captain turned to the first mate, said, "We are doomed, you and I. But, I am not going to cease struggling until the very last."

And then the first mate, a huge, hulking man that looked, for all the world, as if he could have been a medieval peasant, said, "I am going to go below, and have a look in the hold."

He climbed the ladder below. He made his way to the cargo hold wherein the boxes of "experimental earth" were being stored. Grabbing an ax, he began to chop furiously at the lid of one, spilling out black dirt as the wood splintered. Also, come from the thing, like a crawling mass of living cells, were hundreds of furry, writhing rats. The first mate let his breath stop in his lungs.

Soon he heard movement, as of the scraping of a wooden lid being pulled back. Then, like a streak of deathly white luminescense in the deep blackness of the hold, the stark white cadaver of a man seemed to stand straight up from his wooden casket, without even bending to rise. It was if he was pushed from behind by invisible fingers.

The first mate felt his wonder and awe give way, suddenly, to a brutal pang of terror. It stabbed his heart, reeled in his brain as he staggered back to the ladder, leading up through the trap. He climbed furiously up in a panic of terror.

He raced to the foredeck. He threw himself over the side. Death seemed preferable to him. Better death than being on this accursed ship with such a hellish fiend.

The captain, seeing the fate of his first mate, and knowing himself, now, to be the sole survivor, lashed himself to the wheel. In his hands, he gripped his rosary. God may have mercy on his soul, as he would go down with his ship.

The noxious breath of the phantasm blew, and the ship sailed on toward Wisborg.

***

Ellen awakens from one of her nightmares.

Ellen was tossing and turning in another of her fits, and Annie looked on at her, in worry and fear. The silly girl had heard all the superstitious nonsense about sleepwalkers, about how "dangerous" it was to wake them. Was any of that true? She had no idea; Ellen had always been the brave one, if not touched, at times by a bit of melancholy. Annie, dear Annie, felt she had always been the fearful child.

Outside, the moon shone down with a preternatural brightness, illuminating the white walls of the boudoir, painting it in a glowing, eerie light that sent long shadows floating like the messages sent back from an alternate world. Slowly, Ellen pulled the covers from her body, and, her arms outstretched before her, began to slide out of bed, across the slick cold surface of the floor, shuffling in the darkness. Annie threw back her own covers, slipped out behind her.

Where was she going? Back out to the terrace, as she had before? Annie shivered, the cold night air freezing her bones, even as she pulled the nightgown around her shoulders. She wondered if she should awake one of the servants. But, surely, there was no time!

The moonlight shown through the filmy drapes, reflected through the French doors as Ellen, pulling them open feebly, went out onto the terrace. Again, the arms outstretched before her, she began to walk. Annie felt her breath catch in her throat. She raced forward in fear, all at once shaking off the frightened girl she had always been.

She grabbed Ellen by the hem of her gown, pulling her back. The figure on the terrace edge was perched over a height that, though it may not kill her, would certainly injure her very badly.

Ellen wobbled unsteadily. "He's coming!" she cried suddenly. "He's coming, and I must go to him!"

Then, as if by the grace of Providence, Ellen fell back into Annie's arms, her nightgown ripped, her thin, shivering form taking warmth and solace, finally coming awake from the strange state. She shivered in Ruth's arms.

Oh Annie, she said to herself, You've always been such a frightened little girl. Ellen has always been the brave one, the strong one since we were little girls. But, tonight, you've changed all that!

She bent to kiss her sleeping friend.

***

A fog began to creep across the face of Wisborg Harbor, as the old creaking ship, burdened with its cargo of death, its creeping, pestilential curse, slid into port as if guided by invisible hands. Slowly, oh so slowly, it came to rest gently, as if by a miracle.

Aboard, a hideous, rat-like thing with burning eyes waited and brooded below. Around him, his legion of verminous helpers climbed in sickening furry clumps across the wooden floors, squeaking and tittering in the darkness, climbing in hundreds in and out of their filthy dwelling space. It was the "Pest" come home, after centuries away.

In the Siever's Sanitarium, a crouching, insane man, the demented Knock, looked from the hated bars of his accursed cell at the moonlight above. He pulled at the bars, feeling them,

finally, pull loose, after his many, secret nights of filing at them with a piece of metal he had secured.

Suddenly, he felt the metal come free, and there was an opening he could egress.

Spittle drooling from the bottom of his chin, Knock managed to hoist himself, miraculously, to the window opening, crawling out onto the ledge.

Holding his arms out at length, his hair blowing in the wind, his eyes blazing, he cried, "He is coming! He is coming! The master is coming!"

And then he was free.

From *Dr. Bulwer's Diary*: *"I have long tried to understand why Nosferatu travelled with the earth-filled coffins. Recently I discovered that to preserve their diabolic power, vampires must sleep during the day in the same unhallowed ground in which they had been buried."****

The sun drained his strength, but, his huge boxes of earth tucked beneath his arm, the long, cadaverous figure of a rat-like man stole quietly through the empty streets of Wisborg, encountering few people along the way, sticking to the alleyways and back streets, crossing deserted courtyards overlooked by slum lodgings.

At last, he found his way to his gloomy new home. Stealing into the musty murk, he could feel his damned soul soar within. This place was old, full of shadow and crumbling, decrepit time; age, rats, and moldering earth beneath the creaking, groaning floorboards. Here, he would feel as if he had some semblance of peace. Here, he could be home.

He set down his box of earth, and stealing back through the doorway, careful to manipulate the rusted key into the lock, he turned the mechanism with one flick of his thin, skeletal wrist. The rusted working squealed in pain.

He cursed the balmy air, the thin but undeniably hellish sunlight. Then, he stole down a nearby alleyway across the court, into the shadows he loved, once more.

***

Not very far away, Hutter rode his horse down the pathway through the front door of the Harding residence.

He pulled tightly on the reigns, stopping the beast. Shocked, he saw a pale, wan figure come slowly from the door as he ascended the front steps. He had to look twice to assure himself it was Ellen, as she was so thin, so white.

"Johnathan! Thank God you are safe! Now I feel that I too have been saved!"

And with that, her frail body fell, weeping convulsively in his arms.

***

The clomp of heavy boots could be heard that night, walking the creaking boards of the pier in Wisborg Harbor, wherein the ghost ship (some already called it a "Death Ship"), the *Empusa* had come in, mysteriously missing all her crew. That is, save for the captain.

His dead body was tied to the wheel. His rosary was still clutched in his teeth.

Dockworkers were already muttering the lore of ghost ships and curses. One man walked the gangplank to the deck of the ship, followed by his compatriots.

Soon, they brought out one of the curious boxes of experimental earth. Taking a crowbar to it, they pried open the lid.

A furry, crawling horror festered amid the choking dust and dirt inside.

RATS.

Dozens of them began to pour forth from the broken lid of the box, as the men instinctively retreated. One man uttered an oath, and they looked at each other with loathing and a new sense of dread in their gaze.

Rats could mean one thing, and one thing only: PLAGUE. Is that why the *Empusa's* crew had deserted?

Later, still shaken, drinking grog in the Inspector's office, the men discussed what to do.

One man said, "We couldn't find a single living soul on board!"

Another intoned, "If it was fear and terror of the plague, they chose a watery grave to the sufferings of those damned by the pox!"

Orlok (Max Shreck) menacing the ship's crew in a classic scene.

And a third said, "Yes! But we did find the ship's log. Here, listen: '

> *Varna to Bremen*
>
> *24 April 1838. Passed the Dardanelles - East wind - Carrying 5 passengers, mate, crew of 7, and myself, the Captain.*

6 May 1838

Rounded Cape of Inatagran - One of my men, the strongest, is sick - Crew is restless, uneasy."

"Sick, eh," said the Burgomaster, pulling on his pipe. "In time, so we may all be."

The man reading continued:

"7 May 1838. Mate reported stowaway hiding below decks - Will investigate.

18 May 1838 Passed Gibraltar - Panic onboard - Three men dead already - Mate out of his mind - Rats in the hold..."

And then, his eyes growing wide with a frightened, knowing look, he finished:

"...I fear the plague."

There was a pause of a few moments time, the ticking of the clock loud in the ears of everyone assembled. Suddenly, the Burgomaster, taking his pipe from his mouth, leapt, as quickly as his considerable bulk would allow him, from his seat, running out the door and into the silent, quiet, night- time street.

"The Plague is here! Stay in your homes!"

He grabbed the bell by the side of the door, began to ring it frantically. Slowly, questioning heads began to be thrust from window shutters, and a general murmur of fear could be heard, long into the night.

***

Drawing a cross on the door, for fear of the plague.

Before dawn, the town crier was standing in the village square, proclaiming loudly the burgomaster's decree:

"To halt the spread of the plague,
the Burgomaster of Wisborg forbids
the citizens of this city to bring
their sick to the hospitals
until further notice!"

***

Ellen had promised Johnathan that she would never open and read from the Book of the Vampires. However, the accursed thing lay before her on the armoire, dark and dusty and worm-eaten; yet, nevertheless, full of sinister secrets. She crept to it, getting out of bed despite her illness and fatigue and creeping toward it. She could feel her heart beating, feel her blood coursing through her veins as she picked the thing up, thrust open its cover to one of the strange, medieval-seeming illustrations.

My! she thought. *This thing is hundreds of years old.*

She began to turn the pages, aghast at more illustrations, illustrations depicting the burning of heretics and witches, their imprisonment and torture; no, not witches. These looked as if they were already dead.

Some drawings (woodcuts from long, long ago) depicted men transforming into wolves. Some seemed to suggest grave robbing, or exhuming those already in their graves. What? To kill them again? Did these strange peasant folk actually believe in vampires?

One woodcut depicted, much to her horror, what seemed to be a ruler or count (Voivode in their parlance, she knew), sitting at a table outdoors, eating a merry feast.

He was surrounded by men dying, pierced through the gut by huge stakes thrust upward from the earth.

Nauseous, she continued to flip pages out of curiosity.

She found strange symbols. Symbols of alchemy, perhaps. Or black magic. One, in particular, seemed a variation of the star that the Jews wore as their symbol. But this was all wrong, turned upside down and with intersecting lines. She counted five points. In the center was a weird, menacing image; it seemed to be the head of a goat.

"One can recognize the mark of the vampire by the trace of his fangs on the victim's throat. Only a woman can break his frightful spell--a woman pure in heart--who will offer her blood freely to Nosferatu and will keep the vampire by her side until after the cock has crowed."

Ellen felt her own hand stray to the curious wounds on her throat. Doctor Bulwer told her they were very serious. They were not insect bites, as Herr Harding had thought. No. They were...

"The kiss of the vampire..." She said to herself. Just then, she heard Johnathan enter the room.

When he saw what she was reading, he grew angry.

"Ellen," he said, "I told you not to make yourself frightened by looking through that book. Oh, I should have put it away where you couldn't find it!"

But Ellen, a look of terror crossing her face, drew away from him, and drew the book away, and, her face a mask of hypnotized

fear, pointed out the bedroom window to the upper story of the curious house across the street.

"Look, my husband! He is there, every night! In front of me! He is simply waiting! Biding his time!"

Hutter's eyes trailed from the long, thin nail of his beloved wife, to the darkened window. Beyond, in the window of the house opposite, it seemed he saw a tall, skeletal, brooding shadow. It was a thing with long fingers. It seemed restless to him; hungry.

Hutter threw himself against the sash, closing the curtains.

He turned.

"I will go and fetch Professor Bulwer. For I think the fiend is here. You wait in bed. This crucifix will protect you while I am gone."

And Ellen, ever an obedient wife, did as she was instructed. Hutter, bending over her, put the crucifix the old Transylvanian innkeeper's wife had given him, what seemed an eternity ago now, around her lovely throat.

And he kissed her cool, dry forehead, saying,

"For the dead travel fast, Ellen, my love. The dead travel fast."

And he was gone.

***

All night, the clatter of the funeral carts and the cries of the mourners echoed throughout the streets of Wisborg. The wailings and the grief-stricken lamentations of mothers resounded; they who, their children swept into the dark, sepulchral embrace of the churchyard too soon, beat their breasts in woe, sending up curses, pleas, and imprecations to

God. And the dour, droning voice of the priest, the ringing of the bell, was like the creaking music of a tomb whose door would never close.

Ellen went to the window, threw open the curtains, and drew back the filmy sash. She could see them down there, in the trickling, pale moon, their torches and caskets and stricken bodies throwing ghastly, long shadows across the cobbles. Curse them, and curse the plague! She should never get to sleep tonight, she thought.

Her eyes cast upward, to the window of the old house of Carfax, beyond.

Her breath drew inward. She repeated, by memory, the lines she had read from the *Book of the Vampires*:

"'Only a woman can break his frightful spell- a woman pure in heart--who will offer her blood freely to Nosferatu and will keep the vampire by her side until after the cock has crowed!"

She realized she was merely speaking to herself, her voice echoing eerily in the empty dark.

Outside of Dr. Sievers' Sanitorium, two of the old ward maids were speaking of Knock, who was still on the lam. One of them was chewing a cud of tobacco, black dribble spilling down her chin like blood.

"They saw him escape, they did. Strangle his keeper. Blimey! What an odd duck, him and his flies!"

She turned, her seamed, dusty old face crinkling up into a snarl as she spat a streamer of tobacco juice onto the green garden walk.

"They'll nab the rascal again, mind you! And bring him back here to rave and rant, and catch flies, and act the looney he is. As sure as my name's Isabella Pfefferkorn Smythe!"

And with that, both women went back into the thick gloom of the madhouse, to finish their shift.

***

Ellen fell to uneasy slumber.

Scritch-scratch. Scritch-scratch.

She peeps a single eye open. She thinks she is dreaming. The scene before her we can imagine thusly:

A thin finger, like a single talon, is thrust through the filmy sash. The windowpane creaks slowly open. A tall, thin, cadaverous being steals as if surfing upon the moonlight, through the window, his dark boot hitting the carpet with a soft shush.

The window was opened; someone has made his job easy for him.

The room is bathed in shadow, but the pale moonlight illuminates well the surroundings. His piercing, supernatural gaze settles upon the figure lying in bed, the milk-white skin of the young woman whom his passion wishes to devour, to love. But, he knows he can never again love as mortal man.

His burning, rat-like eye drinks in the beautiful, sleeping face, the full lips, the lustrous black hair was thrown back carelessly on the silken pillow. He can sense her life, flowering and flowing in her breast; though, she was, most assuredly, disturbed within her soul. No matter. Tonight that heart was his. It would pump with desire for him, delivering to him her essence, her spirit...her precious blood. Each pump of its four chambers would bring him closer, closer still, to the madness of ecstasy. Moreover, it would

join them forever, in the dance of love and death, in the comingling of destinies and desires; in bloody union, in Heaven and Hell, forever and ever.

"For the dead travel fast," he says to himself. "For the dead..."

Bending, placing his rodent-like pointed fangs against her silken throat, he begins to feed.

***

Meanwhile, Knock, his disciple, was busily climbing the side of a house. One false move, he knew, and he would plummet to his death on the cobbles below. Below, an enraged crowd were sending up a volley of stones and rotten fruit. They had shovels and clubs and what weapons as they could find, and a few dogs snarled in the square below. It was like something out of the middle ages.

Angry shouts and yells, curses and exhortations to "Get him! Get that murderer! He killed his keeper, he did!" were flung up at him, along with a volley of stones, and ghastly, rotten tomatoes that splatted against the side of the wall. Still he climbed upward, his bleeding fingers finding purchase against the rough, uneven surface.

Finally, he managed to pull his heaving, sweating bulk up to the roof. It was a slanting surface, but he could see that, on the other side of this house, lay a long stretch of a country field, a road. Freedom.

Giggling madly, imploring his master to wait for him, Knoch began the ascent of the slanted surface of the roof, past the chimney, and across to the other side.

"Master! Master, I'm coming for you, Master! So we can be together, as you promised! So you can give me...eternal life!"

He managed to make it to the other side, his feet slipping on the shingles; but, my, it was quite a drop down! Could he climb the way down, as he had scaled his mad way up, without killing himself?

***

He did so. But close to the ground, his strength finally ebbed, gave way altogether, and he fell, twisting his ankle badly. No matter. The pain was as nothing. He made for the road.

It was not long before the mob went round the house and through the gate, then across the field, where they spied the tiny, hobbling figure, kicking up dust as he limped along. They began the chase anew.

***

It was not long before he was captured. Which was no surprise; but, what was astonishing was that the angry, plague-terrorized mob didn't lynch him on the spot.

"I say we string him up for what he's done. Why he's no better than a bleedin' animal, he is!"

To which a cooler head proclaimed, "What! He's a lunatic, man! Not responsible for his acts! String him up, and you'll liable to swing for the act yourself. No--"

And Knock, struggling on the ground at their feet, bound securely with strong rope, began to cry out, "Master! Master! Beware! They're coming, Master! They know! They've got me, and now I shall, oh, never have the eternal life you promised! Oh take pity on me, Master, I implore you! Take pity!"

One man said, "Quiet you loon!"

And another spit in his general direction. But Cool Head was accorded his victory, and the men all agreed Knock should be taken in the back of their carriage, to Siever's Sanitorium.

***

DAWN.

Creeping slowly across the face of the mourning world of Wisborg, the cock began to crow.

Orlok had paced in exultation around the sleeping form of his ravished, living repast, his long fingers splayed out before him, his lean, cadaverous frame suddenly exposed in the creeping light of dawn.

Cock-a-doodle-doo!

It was silly. It was a children's fairy tale sound. Yet, with all the love burning in his great, black, dead heart, Count Graff Orlok knew that the spell had seized him. This pure, virtuous girl had bewitched him, enchanted him until dawn. He had drunk at her throat; yet, it was HIS life she would drain to the dregs.

The sunlight. The burning! The flame!

The Hutters' boudoir was filled with thick, choking smoke. Orlok had vanished in a puff of sulfurous gas, a noxious cloud. Johnathan Hutter and Dr. Bulwer were outside the door.

"Ellen, my love! You can rest easy now! The nightmare is over! The fiend is dead!"

Grasping him tightly in her soft embrace, she planted kisses on his face.

"Oh Johnathan, I love you. Forever and ever, and forever!"

***

Back in his cell, Knock twisted and curled his tongue, and spat and writhed in his straitjacket upon the floor.

"Master!" he exclaimed. "Master, oh, Master is DEAD! Oh, no, Master is DEAD! They have killed you, Master! They have killed you! And now, now, I shall never have eternal life!

"But," he considered, "At least I still have my flies!" And as one dotted on his nose, he stuck out his tongue in a doomed attempt to gobble it whole.

And in the history of Wisborg written by Johann Cavallius , it is written:

"And at that moment, as if by a miracle, the sick no longer died, and the stifling shadow of the vampire vanished with the morning sun."

The End

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Afterword

What you have just read is an adaptation of a screenplay, for a movie that can be considered as nothing less, at this late day and age, as obscurity; an antique. It is, however, as seemingly as old and deathless as the hideous, rat-like revenant it portrays.

Initially, it was banned due to a copyright claim made against it by Mrs. Bram Stoker. Murnau, et al., was forced to destroy the copies of their film, and for decades afterward, it was thought to be another "lost" artifact from the silent film era.

Yet, as if it had been imbued with the magic powers of the undead, the cursed thing lurked, like some seething, supernatural serpent, beneath the tidal waves of time, remaining hidden until such time as the stars deemed it necessary to bring

it out into the daylight, shrieking its bleak, sepulchral, banshee-like wail of silence; to haunt the dreams and nightmares of the world, once more.

The curse of *Nosferatu* is a matter of speculation and legendry, and we won't go into here subjects others have already plumed. The curse, if there is one, (call it, perhaps, "Stoker's Revenge") saw F.W. Murnau killed in an auto accident while living in America. With him was his Asian houseboy.

Decades later, interestingly enough, Murnau, much like Graff Orlok, would NOT be left to rest in peace. Instead, vandals or hooligans or cultists or someone, some odious persons, broke into his tomb and stole his skull...

How do you like that for irony?; considering, of course, that Murnau directed what is, perhaps, the most realistic and well-loved silent horror film in history. German police said the grave robbers had left signs of a "ritualistic" nature. None other an occult authority than the late Anton Szandor LaVey suggested that *Nosferatu* was a Weimar-era celluloid incantation, a film whose arcane power transcended the realm of mere movie fantasy.

Be that as it may, the episode did inspire, in this writer, a rather bizarre dream.

In the dream, I had broken into the crypt of a castle. I don't know who I was with, but, whoever it was, we set up an old-fashioned movie projector (like the ones they use to use in schoolrooms). We sat back in the must and murk and watched...*Nosferatu*.

I understand now it was Murnau's crypt.

Life is an illusion. One day you will die, and all of this will disappear, forever. We are illusions, then, making illusions of illusions. There's something about that in the play The Elephant Man by Bernard Pomerance. It's a comic little scene wherein Joseph Merrick discusses with Frederick Treves the idea that Plato put forth, that we are all simply imitations of forms God has crafted in Heaven. Merrick intones, sarcastically, that in his case, God, "Should have used both hands." (The scene begins with this suggestion, visitors marveling that Merrick creates his models, "With just one hand"; i.e. the one that is not deformed. Of course, there is a sly, vulgar double-entendre here, as a certain lewd act is also performed, "with just one hand." But, I digress.)

In the dream, watching those flickering images, I realized that, indeed, we are illusions; imitations of "forms in Heaven" (to borrow a title from Clive Barker).

The actors and creators, writer and set designer, and ALL and everybody responsible for making *Nosferatu* are long since dead. But, Nosferatu, the Undead Revenant, the rat-like fiend who lives forever on human blood, is still alive, as are his vicitms, in the flickering images captured forever and ever, as flame-flickering images on a screen; and on the movie screen of the mind, which will collect them, process them, and bury them, like the unquiet dead, in the churning maelstrom; in the unplumbed depths of our subconscious brains.

There they will fester, like a gangrenous wound, and visit us in our dreamscape nightmares.

Anyone who has ever been really drunk knows the sense of losing "depth perception"; i.e. everything begins to seem as a flat image projected on a screen. It is in these moments when we

begin to realize that reality, such as it is, is simply an illusion of the mind. Whose illusion, precisely, we cannot say.

Well, God, of course, answers the theist. The atheist just as assuredly answers in the negative concerning that particular philosophic proposition. The rest of us are simply doomed to speculate, and fear.

So we are illusions; ALL is an illusion born of our nerve endings, decoding electrical impulses, deciphering the empty spaces filled by molecules of atoms...which are themselves, mostly, empty space.

But we dream. Illusions. Imitations. Forms of Heaven.

We film our dreams, so that, even after all the actresses and actors, the director and producer and screenwriter have long been, as it were, shoveled under, we can replay those dreams, again and again, ad infinitum, into eternity; an illusion watching an illusion, of an illusion.

(And people say that I am mad?)

And *Nosferatu* is a very, very dark dream, indeed.

Until we meet again.

--C Augustine.

November 3rd, 2019.

Metropolis

Adapted from the Novel by Thea Von Harbou

Silent Scream

Act 1: Moloch

Freder played the organ as the images of waves and wonder came crashing down around him, and beautiful, poetic birdsong cheeped from the cascade of dreams induced by Soma, while his fingers pushed the keys of love to exultant strains. Above the stars, in their splendor of the Zodiacal signs, arrayed in vast wonder--the belly of the cosmos. He could reach out with his mind and touch them with mental fingertips. Around him, the world of the Mozartium disappeared, replaced by the cracked and damned earth upon which the waves crashed, from which the fire came bellowing out, the Vulcan's forge, the deep Hellish furnace from which life was born, molten metal life to be shaped toward man's infernal ends.

The waters, the blue skies with burning sunset streaks, the rock shores bathed in crashing salt; these were his visions while he spent his wakeful, impotent hours whiling away his time at the Club of Sons.

Down, beneath him, far, far below, walking five abreast, two downbeat and dirty lines of Workers, the lifeblood that kept the beast Metropolis moving, went, at the whistle of the steam, to the lift. Dressed in the blue linen and tight cap, they proceeded to pass, without looking up, the next five rows of workers, trudging lie unto the living dead, separated only by a small fence in between them. One row advanced like clockwork in one direction, after their ten-hour shift; the other went the opposite direction, going to their private hell, their Dante's Inferno of pumping gears, levers, steam, heat, pistons churning, diodes and crystals and metal gears and cogs turning the wheels of the great

futuristic city, which was like unto a growling beast, sitting atop the pinnacle of the world.

They became, in the eyes of anyone who might view them from above, or from a little distance under the harsh electric light, a slightly swaying creature unto itself, a creature born of many parts, a great serpent of labor, sent below, to hiss alongside the hissing, to groan alongside the machine-groans, to hear their bones pop like pistons in the darkness. All was.

And they stepped, as one mighty entity born of many, into the mouth of the lift. And they descended as if they were falling into darkness and the pit of the grave.

But, high above them, Freder, and the aristocratic "Sons of the Chosen" were at the Club of the Sons, and they were racing. Freder, whose father was Joh Fredersen, Master of Metropolis, was a contestant. On your mark, get ready, get set...go!

And the race was on! And who do you think the winner was?

***

As far below as the machine rooms and the Workers' City were, just as far above, the "Garden of Earthly Delights" beckoned for the sons of the privileged class, the Sons of the Chosen, to make sport with painted courtesans and bare-chested hostesses in exotic costumes, with plumed crowns of hair and ostrich feathers, colors spreading around them like a peacock's plumes.

Freder raced with one in a long line of eager mistresses, having fun, disporting around the multicolored fountain, the shining rays of which threw off the accents of pink, blue, purple, beige--and every other color in a breathtaking rainbow cascade.

A midst this garden of magnificent blooms, the two young lovers wasted their hours at child-like play. Finally, exhausted, and panting, Freder caught up with his girl. Holding her aloft in his arms, he bent her backward, the natural, arching catlike movement of her long, sleek form malleable and soft in his arms, as the white linen young rake-hell bent low, to plant the kiss upon those bee-stung lips.

And all was a supernal, perfect moment of beauty when--

The huge iron doors, so delicately disguised with beautiful, cryptic scroll work, parted. Those doors seemed forty feet tall to Freder, but it was not their height that impressed upon his mind at the moment, it was what was coming through them.

A mass of dirty little ragamuffins, children that looked like the urchins one used to see in the streets in olden times, before the building of the great city forced such people underground, to be Workers. Well, these must, knew Freder, these poor, half-hungry looking little scamps, be the children of the workers. They amassed on either side of a vision. Freder blinked. He was not quite certain that what he was seeing was real.

A young woman was in the center of the mob of kids, her hands stretched out to their scampy, buggy little scalps. But, holding them gently, tenderly. She had a shawl wrapped across her shoulders, a plain, simple dress, blonde hair, and the most electrifying blue eyes that Freder had ever set his own eyes upon.

There was something about that face, those eyes--they recalled the Madonna, Our Lady, a Holy Virgin; they were the electric-blue eyes of a saint.

Freder paused before kissing the girl, who was now looking back over her shoulder at the crowd that had just entered the garden. The young woman who had entered at the head of the procession of children said to them, bending slightly so they could hear: "Look children, these are your brothers!"

Attendants rushed forward, trying gently to usher the whole untidy lot out the door, and finally managing to do so rather a little too forcefully, when Freder suddenly stepped a few paces forward, toward the steps leading up, and asked the attendant, "Who was that woman, sir?"

And the embarrassed attendant, who was nervous he may be harshly reprimanded by the son of Joh Fredersen for even allowing such a display, said, "Just the daughter of some worker."

But Freder knew it was not as simple as that. He bounded up the steps and flew out the double doors, letting them swish shut behind him. At his heels, beautiful swans with long, terrific, arching necks, looked strangely at his eager going.

***

Freder descended down, for the first time in his life. Suddenly, he was curious to find this "daughter of a worker."

He ambled through the huge hall of the machine shop floors, looking on in quiet amazement at the workers in the gallery to either side of him. They danced, rhythmically, to the pulsations of the machines, seeming as if some instructor had choreographed them to a point of robot-like perfection. But, no, he could see they were just pulling the same lever, making the same tiresome, soul-deadening movement over and over, which they would repeat for ten hours.

He rounded a corner, putting his hand on the cold bulkhead. Before him, a vision out a nightmare: the grinding gears of a giant mouth, a pagan god of steel and iron, and, on either side, flanking the face, nine cubicles. Workers, their backs to him, continued their strange, stiff, dance, pulling the same levers, pushing the same buttons, twisting the same knobs.

Jets of smoke, like the sulfurous exhaust of some hellish beast, shot from pipes going up the side of the monster's face. As if it were a giant tongue, a concrete staircase went upward to the two levels of cubicles, separated only by an iron railing. The cubbies themselves were one atop another.

In the engine room, a Worker began to expire from exhaustion, his heart attack dropping him to his knees, as the great thermometer gauging the heat of the boiling machine room began to rise, the blood-red mercury reaching a level he knew was dangerous, catastrophic. Soon, he was reaching up toward the round valve to unleash the pressure, before it was too late.

Freder stood across the machine-room floor, when suddenly--

Kaboom!

An explosion! And men fell and jumped from their cubbies. Boiling clouds of smoke and steam, shooting jets of fire belched forth as if from a dragon's mouth. Freder saw men emerge, their skin hanging from them, seared by the white-hot jets of steam; their clothes hanging from their shoulders as they tore them off in agony.

Suddenly, his vision began to cloud. Red waves of steam began to glow before his eyes, and the face of the mighty machine began to alter.

MOLOCH!

He cried, his hand extending outward, toward the dead and the dying. The mouth of the huge gears became teeth, the metal face of the machine itself transformed into the hideous face of the demon--

MOLOCH!

Now it was not blue-clad, uniformed Workers being led up, up the concrete stairs to their death--it was a bound-together mob of men, condemned to be fed into the Mouth of Moloch, the fires of his ungodly wrath, to be given over as HUMAN SACRIFICES.

On either side of this tremendous mouth, the Priests of Moloch, wearing their Babylonian robes and tall hats, stood, flanking the hungry lips of fire, their arms stretched skyward. The bound, bald human sacrifices were forced into the fire struggling together, seared to ashes on behalf of the unforgiving, iron god.

And then the visions, (which Freder had more and more of these days since he had begun drinking the "Soma", the drugged, intoxicating liquor at Yoshiwara's infamous den of iniquity, a liquor that brought on strange if brief hallucinations and troubled dreams), began to fade, and Freder saw simply blue-uniformed workers with stretchers, some letting the badly-injured rest upon their shoulders as they passed him, seemingly unaware that he was even there.

***

Freder reached out his hand, wanting to help, wanting to offer aid and assistance, and to tell the Workers that he felt for the tragedy of their lives. But what could he do in his fancy white linen and tie? He was, in fact, the wealthy, privileged son of Joh Fredersen, the "Master of Metropolis", and he knew he and the

Workers were worlds apart, separated by the beautiful, glistening, city of wonder above, and the dark, dingy, cave-like dwelling wherein slaved to the machine-god, far below. Slaved through dint of their birth, the station they were born into, their "class." Yet, all men bleed, and all men, even the lowliest, deserve to be rewarded for the sum of their ceaseless toils.

Freder raced out of the machine rooms and took the lift, the hidden lift, up, up. To an exit, flying down a staircase.

He jumped into his car, and barked at the driver, "Take me to my father, now!"

***

Joh Fredersen paced up and down the floor of his office, his "throne room", overlooking the grandeur and majesty of the city he had designed, and now watched over relentlessly as the Supreme Leader. Behind him, Josaphat, his secretary took notes on what he was saying--

"The Workers are becoming restless, Josaphat. I can feel their grumbling like the vibration of this city beneath my feet, under my touch. We must keep them in a state wherein they do not begin to think they can organize, revolt, or even demand better than what they have. We feed them, we clothe them--we give them heat and light. It is enough. They were not born to share in the life we enjoy above. They were born for the machine shops below, to toil and be cared for as efficiently and faithfully as any metal machine. I tell you, this is the way it is, and it must so remain. Otherwise, if we allow them to become equal to ourselves, to stand on an equal platform, we are courting disaster. Nay, all would, in fact, be lost."

Josaphat listened intently if feeling somewhat sickened when Joh Fredersen went on like this, comparing the Workers to machines, or even animals, as he had done in the past. At a table nearby, seven accountants scratched out an endless succession of figures, numbers of varying sizes that fell from the viewscreen above the window. These numbers represented the ins and outs of capital: financial speculation, the annual budget, and the return Joh Fredersen could be expected to reap from his multifarious investments and financial enterprises, from the Great God Metropolis, which blessed him so graciously, and to which he offered service and obeisance. But, he reflected with almost a smile, some confused HIM with that god.

Suddenly, unannounced by the secretary outside, his son, Freder came charging into the room. Joh Fredersen was suddenly disturbed. He could tell by the wild-eyed appearance of his son, his mussed hair, and his general appearance of disarray, that something was deeply troubling him.

Freder rushed up to him, grabbed him by the shoulders, and said, "Father, I have seen a terrible thing today. I have seen men toiling like beasts at unforgiving monstrous machines. I have seen a horrible accident with many men killed, and I have seen the injustice of it all! With my own eyes, I have seen how we treat the Workers below! Father, why do we treat the Workers so badly?"

And then Freder, at his father's shoulder, pointed a finger out the giant window of his father's office (which was in a fantastically-designed building called the "New Tower of Babel") and said, "It was their hands who BUILT Metropolis! It is their blood, sweat, and tears that keep it running. Father, where do their hands belong in the scheme of things? In your scheme?"

John Fredersen turned around, his hands in his pockets, and considered things. He said, "I have always known this day would come, and dreaded it."

"What day, Father?" asked Freder, knowing the answer already, and fearing it.

"The day when you would begin to question the order of things, why things are the way they are. It is probable that, as of right now, you do not understand why it is the Workers are treated in the manner in which they are. But I tell you: it can be no other way. There are two classes of men in this world my son: the brains that think, and the hands that toil on behalf of those brains. To confuse one with the other is to court disaster. I--"

Just then, the sound of the buzzer and Joh Fredersen stepped forward. "Excuse me," he told his son, unnecessarily.

Freder turned his back in dismay and disgust from his father, and the voice on the other end of the intercom said, "Grot to see you, Mr. Fredersen."

Fredersen paused for a moment, and said "Send him in."

After a few moments, a huge, burly man in a Worker's uniform and cap, with a thick, fuzzy beard and burning eyes stumbled in. In his hand, he held what appeared to be a scrap of paper.

"Master Fredersen," he began, "some more of those strange plans found on the body of a worker."

Joh Fredersen sighed. It apparently was going to continue to be a trying day.

He sat down at his desk, took a scrap of paper, and could make nothing of it. He said, "Josaphat...why did you not know of these strange plans?"

Josaphat, still standing over by the sideboard, where lunch was commonly laid out and served, suddenly seemed to freeze in terror. His face drew a blank look, and his throat seemed to close on the words that would not escape from between his teeth.

He could say nothing. One fancied they could hear his heart hammering, like the thump of a piston, in his chest.

Joh Fredersen stood, his face a pitiless mask.

"Josaphat," he said, "you are dismissed."

Josaphat looked as if he had just been pierced through the breast by a sword. His head dropped to his chest, and he slowly and calmly exited the room, throwing wide the heavy double doors. Grot followed him out, huffing and puffing under his great burden of weight, and thinking, "I don't understand these surface-dwellers at all. But I am just the Foreman of Workers, and so it is not my business to understand why they do what they do, or to question them."

Freder was aghast. He looked at his father for the first time with a terrible, burning sense of contempt. He said, "Father! Do you know what it means to be dismissed by you?"

But Joh Fredersen said nothing, and in a moment, Freder had followed the other two men out the door.

Joh Fredersen waited a few moments, then pushed the button on his desk that operated the intercom. He said, "Send in Slim."

In a moment, a tall, cadaverous man in a long tuxedo coat and tie appeared at the door. Joh Fredersen stood, put out a finger, and said, "I want my son watched constantly! Understand?"

Slim said nothing. He was a man of few words, but many strange, secret deeds. He understood well enough.

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Josaphat made his way through the corridor, and, going slowly down the steps, weaving, as if drunk, he produced a pistol, and, making as if to put it to his temple and fire, began to silently weep his sorry fate, his "dismissal" by the Master of Metropolis.

"Here no, none of that!" said a voice behind him, suddenly grabbing the arm holding the gun, and pulling it away. Josaphat blinked. It was Freder, Master Joh Fredersen's son."

"We'll have none of that, Josaphat. You're much to valuable a man to throw your life away in such a fashion." Then, bending forward, as if whispering conspiratorily, Freder said, "Look, I'm going to change things around here, and I'm going to need your help to do it."

Josaphat looked at him incredulously. He said, "I-I don't understand."

But Freder merely smiled. He felt he had really begun to live for a purpose now, and it was filling him full of exultation and joy.

End of Act 1: Moloch

Act 2: Babel

Freder found an egress, a stairwell, leading down, far below, into the machine rooms. The doorway into their world, the world of the Workers, was labeled with the Roman numeral V, and he opened it slowly, feeling the perceptible heat of steam, the smell of exhaust, hearing the roaring and the hammering and the grinding and the moving, always moving, of the machines, and the Workers, who were an extension, by and by, of those very

machines. He walked in slowly, no one even recognizing his presence; or, if they did, daring to acknowledge it.

he was Joh Fredersen's son. What was he doing down here? they must have asked themselves (those who even recognized his presence). Through the smoke and the steam he saw the Workers shuffle forward, heads bowed in mute resignation to their lot in life, which was to toil and suffer. Some drove motorized carts full of metal scrap and detritus, still, others simply went, hour after hour, turning their levers, twisting their knobs. And all for what? So that they could maintain a glistening city above them, one whose joys and pleasures they could never hope to partake in.

It was stiflingly hot down here, and Freder failed to see how a man could even breathe. Under such conditions, he thought, only the strong, those made of iron could hope to survive. Who was the philosopher who said, "That which does not kill me only strengthens me"? Freder could not now remember. But wasn't it a basic tenet of biological evolution, if one believed in such things? That the strong survived, the weak perished so that the strong might propagate more of their kind. And this was the natural way of man.

Ahead of him, Freder saw what he took to be a giant glowing clockface, ringed by light bulbs, and a poor, exhausted young man standing before it. As soon as one of the lightbulbs flickered into life, the man would take one of the arms of the clock face and move it to that bulb. What possible purpose this could serve Freder could only guess, but the man had to be awfully quick to keep up, and he looked as if he was on the verge of collapse.

And then he did collapse, still clinging to the arms of the clock face, and Freder flew forward.

"Brother," he said, "Let me take your place here. Come, we will exchange clothing, and I will man the machine and its infernal arms. But first, I must have a name. What do they call you?"

On the man's hat were simply the numbers eleven-eight-eleven. The man, who looked as if he thought he might be dreaming, stuttered, "Y-you. You're Joh Fredersen's son, are you not? You're..."

"Yes!" replied Freder. "I am Freder Fredersen! And I am here to help you!"

The lightbulbs ringing the giant clockface began to flicker and a buzzing sound could be heard. The man began to limply reach for the arms of the machine, but Freder stopped him, asking again, "What did your mother call you, brother?"

The man paused for a moment, and then said: "Georgy."

"Ah Georgy, very well. When does the shift end?"

But then, just as Freder said this, the steam whistle blew its alarm, and Freder knew that Georgy's hellish ten hours were, for the time being, at an end.

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The two men quickly exchanged clothing. freder gave him the slip of paper with Josaphat's address on it.

"Go to Josaphat," he said. "Tell him I am down here among the Workers. Tell him this is where I intend to stay until my father relents in his merciless treatment of them. Go. And be advised that my father's agent Slim is probably on my tail! Be warned!"

Georgy thanked him, shaking his hand, and said, "She...she speaks of one who is coming. A sort-of messiah, whom she calls "The Mediator." I think you may be just that man, my friend."

And before Freder could say another word, Georgy disappeared in the clouds of steam and smoke, and Freder began to manipulate, as quickly as he could, the arms of the giant clock face. Soon, sweat was pouring down his face, into his armpits, all over his body, soaking the front of the blue uniform he wore. He barely had time to doff his cap and wipe the sweat from his eyes before another lightbulb flickered to life.

Georgy found his way outside of the machine rooms, taking the lifts up, dressed as Freder in fine white short pants, a fine silk shirt, and a tie. Not a single citizen of Metropolis accosted him on his way or even turned their head at his passing. He did not look like a Worker now. Now he looked like a son of the privileged, a small-time aristocrat.

He went quickly down a concrete flight of stairs to Freder's waiting car, his eyes opening wide to see the vast city that he and his kind kept moving, moving, moving, eternally bustling, like a giant glistening colony, in the bright rays of the sun the Worker far below, toiling in darkness and drudgery and filth, rarely got to see.

The city was a vast and sprawling wonder, huge towers rising into the air, elevated trams and aero cars zipping through the heights, and, below, endless lines of cars, like heavy metal insects when seen from above,, ever moving, ever moving, towards some place of idol amusement or consumerism, if not some gigantic office with a panoramic view of the majesty that was...Metropolis. And, at night, with all of the vast searchlights and the neon and the bright glow of so much electrical juice being consumed--what must it look like then? Lavishly clothed in the finest attire, it would become an ocean of beautiful bodies, headed to so many restaurants and cinemas, gambling parlors

and whorehouses, taverns, and even the opera. The cathedral at the center of the city, which Joh Fredersen had long since considered tearing down against the eternal protestations of Destrus and his cult of monk-like minions, was only ever frequented by a few, very few, pious souls. The rest of the endless city seemed like one parade or party that never ceased. Especially at the house of ill-repute"; especially at YOSHIWARA'S.

He told the driver where to go, but, as they stopped at a traffic liht, he looked over into the next car. There, before him, was a vision of loveliness as perfect, as angelic as anything he had ever seen, sitting in the back seat of her chauffeured limo. She was putting on her lipstick and rouge, her painted face. The wives of the Workers did not use such accouterments. Only Maria he found half as beautiful as this wanton creatureand Maria was a woman he thought of as sacred, incorruptible, Like unto a saint.

But not this woman. Suddenly he told the driver, "Driver, stop this car at once!"

The driver did so. Georgy flew from the backseat, and, opening the back door of the limo in which the woman was riding, seated himself beside her, scooting close, thrusting out his hand, telling her, "Hello! My name is Georgy! I-I am sorry if this seems a bit forward, but I couldn't help but notice how beautiful you are, and I decided that I just had to come over here and introduce myself!"

The woman looked for a moment as if she didn't know how to respond and then burst out laughing. "Well my," she said, a "Well my," she said, a trifle embarrassed, "We are forward, aren't we?" and she stretched out her hand and introduced herself.

"I'm Georgy, " he replied, a little awkwardly, a little embarrassedly now, for having barged into her car so abruptly

and without invitation. Behind them, fellow motorists began to honk their horns for the car to speed forward, as the light had changed. The chauffeur eyed his mistress nervously, wondering what it is he should do.

"I tell you, we must be off. But I'll be seeing you later I take it. At Yoshiwara's?"

He mouthed the word slowly. The term seemed pregnant with possibility. He then, coming back to the role he was playing (as a rich young privileged son of Metropolis, instead of a Worker), "Oh, oh yes. At Yoshiwara's. I'll be there this afternoon. I-I hope I shall see you there as well."

"And so we shall!" she laughed, and then hurried him out of the car. He climbed back into the backseat of his own, as the lane of traffic next to them sped off, and her card disappeared in the metallic swarm of others.

Suddenly, as if by a miracle, it seemed to be snowing large paper sheets outside the backseat windows. He rolled the window down, the wind blowing in a sheaf of handbills into the backseat. Someone, he thought, someone is standing on top of the bridge above us, throwing these down by the sackful.

In fancy typescript across the handbill was typed a single, enigmatic name:

YOSHIWARA'S.

Below that, there was a map and directions. An address. But, he thought, I'll be able to see it by night. The front of the building, at least as far as the picture on the opposite side of the handbill portrayed, was as ornate as an oriental temple, and framed by two huge spotlights. And, the night was falling.

"Driver!" he ordered. "Take ne to Yoshiwara's at once."

All thoughts of any other destination or duty had temporarily vanished from his mind.

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In the center of the city stood a house, an old-fashioned, barn-like structure, that had stood from ancient times. It was dwarfed on all sides by the tall high-rise apartments and office buildings, and it was a house of almost monumental ugliness. Dark, black walls that seemed to draw in the darkness around them, and a roof that came sloping down on either side, rotting shingles sometimes being blown off in the passing breeze. Most headed in the general direction, if they knew of it, would go out of their way to give it a wide berth. It was, after all, fabled to have once been the home of a *hexe*, an evil sorcerer, or, as he was known in the legend, the "Warlock of the Red Shoes." Once, when digging in the cellar, workmen had found the remains of just such a man, wearing red shoes. Ever since then, the appellation of the "Red-Shoed Hexe" had stuck. people wondered if these were the actual remains of the fabled spellcaster of yore.

It was to here Joh Fredersen, the Master of Metropolis had directed his driver, and it was upon the old oaken door, decorated with the pentagram, turned round so that the two top points faced upward evilly, as if they were the horns of the Baphomet, that he slammed the heavy brass knocker. It was several moments before the door was slowly, creakily cracked open, and a tiny eye, far below him, peered out.

It was Rotwang's dwarf servant. And this, this feared old haunted place, this was Rotwang's house. It was here he carried on his experiments.

"I am here," said Joh Fredersen slowly, "to see your master."

The dwarf said nothing but closed the door slowly. After what seemed an interminable time, but must have only been a few minutes, he came back, opened the door, and said, "Yes, the Master says he will see you now."

Joe Fredersen entered the dark, damp, foul-smelling abode. He was acutely aware of the strange contrast the place presented--as for the fact that, while it crumbled around its strange, mad dweller, a virtual ruin, it was filled with the weird, highly-advanced scientific apparatus, the weird glowing, twisted tubes and strange, sparking coils of his experiments. His, reflected Joh Fredersen's, was a brilliant mind. However, it was a mad one, he reminded himself with the next thought. The dwarf led him to a room half of which hid an alcoved curtain in the darkness. He was left there momentarily as the dwarf went to fetch Rotwang. With one hand, Joh Fredersen pulled back the heavy red velvet curtain and looked at what he found there.

it was a vast marble monument, like what one might find in an old graveyard; however, much bigger than any gravestone he had ever laid eyes on. On top of it, roughly carved from the marble, was the image of a woman's head. She might have been a Greek goddess, but Joh Fredersen recognized her instantly. It was Freder's mother, Hel, who had died.

Below, the inscription on the monument read:

HEL

BORN TO BE MY LOVE

LOST

TO JOH FREDERSEN

DIED

GIVING BIRTH TO HIS SON FREDER.

"Ah," said a familiar voice behind him, cutting through the darkness. "So you have found my little monument, eh Joh Fredersen? And what do you think of it, Joh Fredersen? Have I not recreated her in marble, as exquisite and beautifully ravishing a work of loveliness as ever graced this cursed planet...Joh Fredersen? But, come, I will show you something, something remarkable, Joh Fredersen. I have recreated her in another way so that she is not only a block of marble, but she can become a real living, breathing, moving, and animate woman again...Joh Fredersen! I have defeated DEATH!"

Joh Frederssen had forgotten Rotwang's annoying habit of repeating his full name every time he spoke. But he said nothing of it. The man was as crazy as a loon, but he was brilliant, and often his intellect was invaluable.

He followed Rotwang up a spiral staircase to the upper floor of his chambers, to this laboratory. There, amid the beakers and bottles, the inscrutable apparatuses of metal and glass, and the huge walls of dials and levers and switches, there was what Joh Fredersen took to be a sort-of stage. And another red velvet curtain.

A t one wave of the mad old scientific wizard's hand the curtain parted and there, seated on a heavy metal throne, beneath a huge pentagram, sat a woman. But, Joh Fredersen realized, she was a woman made entirely of metal parts; a machine. A--

"PARODY! I call her 'Parody Artifice Futura.' She is a robot, Joh Fredersen, as you can see!"

Indeed, Joh Fredersen could see that quite plainly. But, had Rotwang actually managed to bring her to a semblance of life?

"Joh Fredersen, I tell you she can walk, talk, and think her own dark, troubling, metal-machine WOMAN thoughts, Joh Fredersen. But, Joh Fredersen, she lacks one thing, and one thing only! Do you know what that might be, Joh Fredersen?"

He looked with amazement at the blazing eyes staring into his own with accursed madness. they were ringed with dark circles, standing out in harsh contrast to the maniacal pale face, the whispy white mane of hair, and the dark, gauntleted hand that Joh Fredersen knew to be an artificial limb. Rotwang's hair had turned white overnight, for grief at losing Hel, and some swore that he had cut off his own hand in despair. (But Joh Fredersen believed he had probably lost it in a laboratory accident.)

"You're wrong about that, my brilliant friend. She is...better off without one."

Joh Fredersen, was taken aback when Parody rose from her metal throne and came walking, slowly, like clockwork, toward them. But there was nothing,m he observed, about their movements that were not smooth. She could be made to seem human-like, he noted, even though her face was a strange metal mask.

"I tell you, you are the most brilliant inventor known to me. The thing is fantastic, a work of rare genius. But this is not why I have come."

And with that, Joh Fredersen retrieved the plans from his coat pocket. He said, "We have found these same cryptic plans on the bodies of several workers. We do not know as to what they refer, what they mean. I tell you: I fear the Workers are plotting something, planning something. Revolt perhaps."

Rotwang did not seem overly saddened by this prospect, but instead said, "Ah! The whip hand is afraid the whipping boy will grab the whip, right Joh Fredersen? That the poor mule who has been overburdened, whose back is breaking, is one day simply going to refuse to toil and strain for you, is that it Joh Fredersen? That slave shall rise up to become master when realizing how many of the joys of life have been denied them, though they are the ones whose ceaseless labor produces those joys. Is that the way things stand, Joh Fredersen? Well," and Rotwang took the plans, and began to examine them carefully.

These are plans to the ancient catacombs, Joh Fredersen. And a secret rendevous or meeting. But, it must surely involve many of the Workers. Come, I will take you down, down, far below, into the ancient catacombs, into the ancient burial spaces, the charnel house of rock and bones, Joh Fredersen. And we shall see what this meeting is, what it entails. There is an entrance to the catacombs right beneath my house, Joh Fredersen. Come!"

Joh Fredersen started forward, but then asked, "Is it safe?"

Rotwang turned to him with a sneer of contempt. "Safe?" he exclaimed. "Joh Fredersen asks me if it is safe. I take you to a place of burial and death, to dark, dripping caverns of loose rock, where men have met death, trapped in the darkness, crushed by cave-ins, or dying like rats when they became lost in the darkness, Joh Fredersen. Oh, it is so dark, Joh Fredersen, without an electric torch you cannot see your hand in front of your face, Joh Fredersen. But, come, these plans show that the place of the meeting is not very far into the ancient depths. We will not become lost, Joh Fredersen, not will any harm befall you while we are down below." And with that, Rotwand lifted his gauntleted, artificial hand imperiously, and motioned Joh

Fredersen forward, to a side door, into which they both descended down an uneven flight of steps, carved into the stone.

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For many hours Freder had toiled at the giant glowing clock face until he was covered in sweat and the front of his uniform was soaked in it. His arms felt heavy with exhaustion, and sweat poured down his face, fell into his eyes, and rolled down his chin to drip onto the concrete floor.

There was hardly time to stop and wipe the sweat from his brow before the next light blinked into life, and he had to move the clock arms around to it, or else the machine would stop functioning, and then...who knows? "Oh, he asked himself, "when will this cursed shift be over?"

And then, as if in answer to his prayers, the steam whistle sounded, and the men began to slowly wake from their stupor of drudgery, and leave their machines. As Freder stood there, trying to catch his breath, a fellow Worker came up to him and thrust a paper into his hands, saying, in a conspiratorial whisper, "Maria has called another of her meetings." Freder looked down at the page he had been handed. It seemed to be a map of some sort, with two crosses as a sort of "x marks the spot."

Around him, men began to slowly leave their machines. Some, he knew, were returning to their homes; still, others seem to be shambling, as if in a group, toward some dark, hidden area in the back of the machine room. By instinct, Freder followed them, folding the paper and putting it in his pocket. He followed, and the way lead down corridors and through broken archways and into old crypts and cellars and down long, cavernous tunnels of gloom. Where were they going?

It was to a secret underground grotto, a chapel, bedecked with holy crosses, that they finally came, and Freder sat amongst what was now his brother Workers. Looking up in his exhaustion then, he saw her: the virginal beauty, the Instrument of Divine Grace, dismissed by an attendant at the Garden of Earthly Delights as "just the daughter of some worker." But, no, it was Maria, the woman who had brought the children into the garden, who had told them, "See, these are your brothers and sisters!" And, by doing so, had changed Freder's life forever.

In her presence one felt the angelic touch of peace. From her cobalt eyes of striking blue, the divine fire burned white hot; mystical, ghostly. She raised her arms, her pretty dress of blue billowing out around her dainty feet, her shawl wrapped around her shoulder and arms. On her face she wore the look of an anchorite, a mendicant, a vestal virgin, a saint. her very gaze was a beatitude.

Men sat patiently on the cold stone floor, waiting. Finally, her soft, lilting tones penetrated the darkness, lit only by candles, and she said, "Brothers, I come to you today to tell you a great and new dawn is fast approaching, one in which our great toil will be finally rewarded, and we will be able to share with our brothers and sisters above, a portion of the good things of life, for which we have so sweated and slaved."

"And how can this be, Maria? Please tell us!" cried one man in the crowd below the wooden podium. "yes, tell, us!" cried the others.

Maria seemed then as if she were lost in a trance, as if she were looking into another world, one that was invisible to the naked eye, but which only she, in her capacity as a prophetess, could look into. Slowly she said, "between the hands that toil and

the mind that plans, there must be a mediator. The Mediator. And that must be the heart. I tell you, The Mediator is coming! He is among us, even now!"

At this, men joined their hands together, doffed their caps in an act of pious respect, and implored Maria to "Teach us! Please, Maria, teach us your wisdom and speak your truth!"

And Maria said, her face a nearly immobile mask, "I will tell you the story of Babel." And with that, she began.

The Story of Babel

"Once," began Maria, "in the long ago, King Nimrod and his advisors besought themselves a way to reach God in his heavenly abode. And so they thought, and cast about for a way, until, one day, King Nimrod said unto them, "Come, let us make a tower that will reach to the heavens, and let it be thrust skyward so that a man may ascend to the top of it, day after day, until, finally, he can reach God in His heavenly abode. And we will inscribe on the base of this tower, so that all may see, the phrase 'Great is the world and its creator, and great is man.'"

Maria continued, her arms still lifted to her sides, as if she might be put upon one of the wooden crosses behind her, just float up to it on a beam of holy light.

"So from all over the world, workmen were called, and they came in great numbers, droves of them traveling from all points to build the great tower. And they began work, and the amazing structure grew and grew upward until it reached beyond the clouds. The workers, many of whom gave their lives to help build the project, were most pleased.

"But then, there were grumblings in the ranks. The workers began to complain that their masters, the architects, and overseers of the titanic project, were not planning on "Sharing the heavens," with them, or allowing them access to the wondrous, golden splendor of the tower which they, themselves, had built. They became restless, angry, and discontented, knowing that they might never share in the great project that they had broken their backs to see become a reality.

"Their tongues were many and confused. There was no communication. Perhaps the Divine Spirit confused their tongues, but it all amounted to the same thing...BABEL, a word dripping blood with all the horror it entails. There was confusion, fighting; a revolt! This is the story of the Tower of Babel, which was never completed. Oh, but men will still say, 'Great is the world and its creator, and great is man.'" And they may be right about the former, but, as to the latter, well...Man may be great, but is he moral? Does he not need the heart to mediate between the hands that build and the head that plans?

"Between the hands and the mind, there must be a mediator and that mediator must be the heart. I tell you: Our mediator is soon to come."

Men began to openly weep, folding their hands across their chests, and one cried out, "But when, Maria? When will our mediator arrive? We grow weary of waiting, and the burden we bear is so great. On behalf of my wife and children: when will this messiah you speak of arrive?"

And Maria, as if suddenly broken from her trance, said:

"He is already here, among you. Just waiting until the time is right. I tell you. I can feel it."

And then she added:

"You must be patient. Do not destroy yourselves out of frustration. You must wait."

One man in the audience below, a big, gruff man with a bad temper, then piped up, "We will wait. But not much longer."

Soon, the Workers began to file out. All but Freder, who skulked in the shadows, waiting to be alone, so he could speak with Maria in private. Though he reflected, he hadn't the foggiest notion of what words to say.

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Above, staring through a hole in the heavy stone, Joh Fredersen and Rotwang looked and listened intently on the scene that had just transpired below. Joh Fredersen was disturbed. Here the seeds of discontent were being planted by this strange girl, and they could, he knew, easily blossom into the ripe fruit of outright rebellion. Of course, for now, she was placating them with talk of a "messiah," a...what did she call him? The "Mediator."

But how long can that last, he asked himself? He turned to Rotwang, "Rotwang, what do you, in your infinite brilliance, say we should do about this, eh, this little problem we have developing here? That girl, that girl could be very dangerous, very dangerous to Metropolis, to me. Even to you, as, though you are not a common citizen in the same sense as everyone else, you are not forced below ground like a Worker, but can commence your experiments and research in the midst of the city."

Rotwang was silent for a moment, and then, his eager face lit up with the mad genius that marked his soul.

"Ah, Joh Fredersen," he began, "I do think I have a solution for you, Joh Fredersen! I can give my beautiful robot, Parody Artifice Futuram the image of the girl. The girl, we can keep hidden away in a locked chamber of my house. The robot Maria, for that, is her name, did you not hear?--she will be as putty in your hands, yours to control. She will so shock the Workers in her glum pronouncements of failure and hopelessness, they will never rebel, but will go on, Joh Fredersen, toiling away here in the darkness and dust, as they always have, amid the god-like machines that preserve the shining city above, a city in which they cannot live and virtually never see."

Joh Fredersen thrust his hand into his pocket and was suddenly smiling. He said, "Ah yes! Yes! my friend. Why you are brilliant! Yes, yes...I tell you: kidnap the girl. Give your robot her likeness, and lock her away. I'll have her dealt with later, and there will be no blood on your hands. Then, command your robot to stifle any dissension in the ranks of the Workers. let them, through her, know that rebellion is a useless gesture, that their lot in life is exactly that...their lot, their station. Their class. They are sheep and are easily led. Well, we may stamp this rebellion down like a brush fire before it yet has time to grow!"

And Rotwang smiled, a look that, upon his face, was horrible.

"Yes," he said, "Joh Fredersen, it will be done exactly as you have instructed. All will be in readiness soon, and all will go according to your plan." Secretly he thought, And Joh Fredersen, I have my own plans as well."

"Excellent! You must let me know when you are ready to commence operations! Now, I must be getting back..."

Rotwang stalled for a moment. He could see again, a strange light, play over the cavern walls, like a miniature glowing orb, and

he wondered if Joh Fredersen could see it too. He had seen it down here before, and he wondered at it. Piezoelectric phenomena? Or, as he secretly felt, spirits of the dead? There were many old bones, he knew, lying about down here, where once the unfortunate were buried and died.

He led Joh Fredersen out of the catacombs, back to the lab and to his waiting chauffeur.

***

Freder was alone with Maria. he approached her, his Workers' cap clutched in his hands, and felt the beautiful words he had rehearsed stick in his throat.

He looked into her eyes. They were like twin pools of deep, fathomless, mystic beauty. Her face was the face of an angel. In an instant, he knew he was in love.

They stared at each other for a moment. behind them, the crosses surrounding the podium reared their chaste, stark ugliness upward. As if watching them greedily from their wellspring of darkness, the circles of light provided only by the many candles set about.

Maria began slowly, the sweetness of her lips accentuating the beautiful softness of her face.

"Yes?" she said.

Freder approached slowly with his hate in his hand, hypnotized by the holy wonder of those depp blue pools that shone out so vividly int he darkness. the golden hair, the supernal face--she was a living embodiment of all that was most high and holy and pure.

He faltered. At first, the words caught in his throat. And then, with an effort he thought he did not possess, he said, simply,

"Forgive me, fraulein, but I am a humble worker, and I didn't mean to do anything but speak with you."

But he knew what he said was not right.

He began again:

"Dear Maria, I have heard your message, and it has marked me in the deepest part of my soul. Allow me to introduce myself: I am Freder Fredersen. I am the son of Joh Fredersen."

MAria's face went slack with amazement. Then she said,

"Ah yes, NOW I recognize you from the telescreen news programs! And, I have seen you ...somewhere else before, I think.

Freder suddenly popped up, "In the Garden of Earthly delights. At the Club of the Sons."

Well, my, what are you doing here dressed as a Worker, Freder Fredersen?"

freder twisted his blue cap in his hand, looking at his feet, suddenly embarrassed and ashamed. At a loss for words. Then the impetuous courage of the brash young man within gripped his heart, and he said, "I-I want to help the Workers. To overcome their oppression. I believe what you say, Maria, about the Mediator that is coming. The one who will be the heart. the onle that will bring understanding--"

"Between the hands and the mind," she finished for him. Suddenly, their eyes met in an eternity of love, and they felt as if they had known each other for all time.

MAria bent forward, into the kiss. THey were suddenly holding each other in a deep and passionate embrace, before she tore herself loose.

Suddenly, she seemed frightened. She said, "Go Freder. I tell you, it is three o'clock now. The shift will begin in a few hours again. Meet me in an hour at the cathedral. I have some things to do first, but they shall not take long to accomplish."

Freder was confused.

"At the cathedral? Why?"

She started to answer in a voice that was almost as if she were scolding a disrespectful child, but said, "Just...meet me there. In an hour. I have my...reasons."

He nodded slowly, began to back away, into the darkness. Then he worried slightly: How would he ever find his way back to Worker's City?

"You must go," she said, "and join the others. Before they have all gone and you are lost down here, with me needing to show you the way."

"Oh," he answered, "I think you have done that already. But yes, I go. I'll be at the Cathedral in an hour. I promise you. Then, perhaps, we can really talk."

He bent, kissed her once more on the cheek then turned. But before he left, he said, "I see that it is wrong the way we treat the Workers. The way my father rules them with a merciless, iron fist. And I am committed to changing that, whatever it takes. I--"

But he couldn't finish, and turning, he disappeared into the darkness.

Maria said to herself, "Then He has come."

***

Maria snuffed out candles in the gloom, as she proceeded out of the catacombs to the outer entryway, back to the Worker's

City gates, and then to the Cathedral, to meet Freder. Maria knew the ancient, holy place was the one building in Metropolis that Joh Fredersen wanted to level, but he averted any war with the Church or its true believers out of pure pragmatism. Hm. Joh Fredersen did not think that man, tiny, finite, and doomed to death, NEEDED God; after all, he had his machines, in the shape of his New Gods. But, she considered, these were all deities of the Heathen soul: Baal, Ashtaroth, Astarte, the twisted metal filaments their arms and legs, the piping going to their whirring, grinding teeth, their Moloch faces sending out the pestilence of death-like toil, making their supplicants their slaves. And to these gods, she knew men--her brothers and their sons--were often sacrificed.

Such thoughts pervaded her mind as she heard the peculiar tread of footsteps behind her in the darkness. Was it Freder again? No. She didn't think so. She could hear someone creeping behind her, hidden behind an outcropping of rock in the darkness. Suddenly, a light--

A gauntleted hand reached out from the blackness behind, putting out the single flame of the tall candle she carried. A searchlight beam covered her form, moving up her body like a disk of power. Behind that light, she could see a maniacal face with wispy white hair and mad, burning eyes, ringed by black.

She ran, stumbling and tripping over the rock in the darkness, the light following her, like a bullseye, making her a target. A dead end! She threw her hands above her head in terror. Still, that pursuing face, those footsteps quickened, and that light was trained upon her form.

Hands reached for her in the darkness. Suddenly--'

End of Act 2: Babel

Act 3: Parody Artifice Futura

Maria sat disconsolately in her cell, a pair of mad gleaming eyes shining out at her from the darkness. She rubbed her head. There was a massive bruise beginning to form on her cranium. What had he done to her? She felt so strange, so ill. Was it the magnetic power of his sinister eyes? He crept closer to her in the darkness.

"Oh, my pretty, my pet. You shall not escape me again...my darling, my Hel. You shall be one with me again, reborn, as it wore, your immortal face covering the metal face of my beautiful, beautiful work of genius, my Parody. You have made history this evening; yet, it is so sad that you must be confined here, permanently it seems, until we know exactly what to do with you. Oh no, my Parody, my Artifice...my Hel. You are not to be killed. We are not barbarians. We are explorers. We are scientists who are plumbing the depths of infinity. Yet, to do so, we must maintain control. We must maintain order. The filthy, vile Workers must be kept in their place. Ah, I know you feel you hail from their stock. You bleed for them because you believe that the same blood they possess flows through your veins as well. But, I tell you, that is an untruth, a lie! You are of noble birth, my dear; an orphan down below. You are my Parody. You are my Hel..."

Maria looked into the manic eyes of the insane Rotwang. She was aghast at his pale-white face, the dark circles ringing his mad eyes, the shock of solid white hair, the flowing dark robes, and,

worst of all, the strange, gauntleted hand that moved mechanically.

"Oh," she began slowly, "God keep you! You cannot imprison me here. Please! I implore you, you must release me! I have to fulfill the reason for which I have come. To make way for the Mediator! To free my people from Babel..."

Maria full well knew that her cries and imprecations to Rotwang would fall on deaf ears. She thought frantically for a means to escape. She wondered for a moment, almost ready to ask him why he kept calling her "Hel." But, instead, she rose, pushed past him, leaped with all her strength upon the table, and pulled frantically, desperately, at the bars of the skylight, which was set into the angle of the ceiling. It was open to the outside, and her cries echoed through the dim, deserted courtyard. But, as they say of a tree, if there is no one around to hear it fall, has it made any noise at all?

***

If Maria could have seen what was done to her, if she had been awake when Rotwang gave her very image to that of his beautiful clockwork Parody, she would perhaps have died of the shock of knowing it. Instead, she was drugged, asleep beneath a glass chamber reinforced with iron bands, a leather cap with electrodes and wires placed upon her sleeping head. She had been stripped nude, a beautiful, desirable creature. Still, it was nothing to Rotwang, who was a cold automaton now, who revealed, behind the curtain his clockwork woman, Parody Artifice Futura, seated on her metal throne beneath the inverted pentagram, the symbol of the dark, Cthonic forces Rotwang wished to call up.

All around him, test tubes, and beakers, and bottles of strange chemicals began to glow with a ghastly light. He threw switches and turned levers, operated dials, and examined electrical meters as coiling metal began to spark and the dangling silver ball above the clockwork woman's head began to shoot bolts of lightning to each side.

Rings of power, like luminous smoke, moved up and down her heavy metal frame, as her eyes began to glow, and the metal frame darkened, revealing the movements of glowing chemicals within the robot's body. The tubes within Parody revealed her inner organs as they were, and she was slowly transforming, a weird mask of living flesh being transferred to her stiff, cold robot form.

Finally, the face began to take shape, covering the rigid metal mask beneath. The body metamorphosed as Rotwang held the glowing wands of power, connected to his arcane machinery by heavy cables, and felt his heart skip a beat as the thing happened.

"It lives!" he cried. "It lives! My Parody! My HEL!"

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Georgy 11811 was in the Club of the Sons. Here, he was astounded at the palatial beauty of the decor, the expensive sculptures and artwork, and the multi-colored fountain that bubbled forth with the champagne that was continually doffed by the wealthy, privileged celebrants here. The music, the dancing, and the delicacies. Gourmet food, fine wine, and beautiful women; painted courtesans. He strode in, dressed in white finery for the first time in his short, bitter life, and was immediately taken for Freder. A young woman with Ruby red lips came toward him, threw her arms around him, and said, "Ah,

Freder, it is so wonderful to see you, my darling. Come! you are just in time to imbibe some SOMA and see the shows!"

Georgy had no idea what "Soma" was, but he knew that, while he was here, he would follow whatever customs and etiquette were expected. She led him to a bar, wherein she spoke with the bartender in a low whisper, before showing him into the back room, which was divided by a series of jade screens, each adorned with the image of a different Chinese dragon, or a Hindu deity, or some other exotic representation from Eastern lands.

Mythological creatures, he thought to himself. Gods and Beasts. Demons.

They sat at a table, and the ruby-lipped woman poured him a glass full of rare wine, then settled back on the cushioned settee, eyeing him like a greedy, vulpine animal, and sipping her drink as if it were broth.

He did the same. Inside himself, he felt the drudgery of his past life clear away, slowly, and desire crept into his soul, desire for the woman, the courtesan; the whore. There was no sense of shame or guilt. He forgot, for that moment, who he was and where he had come from.

I cannot believe, he thought to himself, that men live this way. He, for a strange moment, thought he was simultaneously in paradise...and Hell. It was all too much.

The woman was a painted courtesan, a lovely, desirable peacock, with ruby red lips and pale, ivory skin. She sipped the wine from her crystal goblet slowly, eyeing him with a predatory gaze. She thought him to be Freder.

"I...I must say, I believe that you are the most handsome, the most charming man in this entire club..." She said this with the

ringing music of her tones piercing the heavy, melodious air, rife with thick, sweet-smelling tobacco and the sound of orchestral music. "Come, let us drink some Soma together, and then we'll retire to a more...private place."

She rang a small golden bell on the table, and soon, a waiter came, sporting a silver platter upon which were two small glasses of a green liquid.

"Drink," she said, her eyes sparkling and radiant, "drink, and allow the Soma to take control, take you on a journey the likes of which you have never before been. Then, allow me to show you...a time which you'll never forget."

He felt his passion rise and took the glass in trembling fingers. This was a "pearl of great price" in his eyes, not the coarse, bland daughter of some worker, a drudge with a face full of dusty creases, worry, bad teeth, and a brat on each arm. Here was an elegance, a beauty he had never before laid eyes on. Men, he thought, should burn in Hell for living so good while others starve. But he went ahead and drank the Soma, suddenly sent to a place where lights and colors exploded behind his eyes, as he felt himself descend into a garden of supernal pleasure, falling, falling, falling....always falling, through an eternity of blissful color and shape. And falling, as it were, into the arms, and the bed, of the painted whore sitting before him.

Later, after making love, Georgy showered and dressed quickly, still feeling the intoxicating effects of the Soma drugged drink and the slight hallucinations it induced, playing at the edges of his field of vision, like colored smoke.

I'll have to have some more of it, he thought. And, knowing his credit was unquestioned here, as he was Joh Frederson's son, he rang for a bit more of the liquor-drug. He then found himself

wandering into what seemed to be a large, circular chamber with a tennis net stretched across it. Ah, a robotic game!

The attendant took one look at his intoxicated, bleary form and smiled. He was directed back to a locker room where he could change clothes. He did so quickly, running himself under a quick, foamy shower and letting robot arms sponge him clean. He then dried off, donned the shorts and white polo shirt, and grabbed the racket.

He went out onto the court. All was darkness, but the Soma was creating strange, green, and orange shapes on the wall. Suddenly, a ball shot out of the darkness at him, and he lunged to hit it--but his reflexes were too slow, and he missed. A loud voice came over the speaker unit, a woman's voice, telling him it was a "strike-out." Drugged or not, he thought to himself, he would have to be quicker next time. Soon, he got the hang of it and began to race across the now-revolving court, slamming the ball into the darkness beyond and having the robotic arms toss it back at him whilst colors and strange shapes burst behind his eyes.

***

Freder heard the drip, drip, drip of water as he walked through the silent cathedral, watching as worshipers knelt before the image of the bleeding Christ before the altar. They knelt also at the statue of the Blessed Virgin, who had appeared in this place in medieval times and caused it to be consecrated to God, to be built by the Workers of that time of stone, with human toil and sweat and blood. All was silent here. There was only the shuffle of feet, the swish of robes and dresses getting up from their kneeling position. And the ceaseless drip of water that, he wondered, might be blessed.

Beneath, in the catacombs, were buried the ancient monks. In a strange alcove, seven grim statues--the "Seven Deadly Sins"--looked out at the worshipper, reminding him or her of the profligacy that was the path to Hell. Greed, Envy, Anger, Gluttony, Lust, Sloth...What was the other? He couldn't remember. But, then, he had never been raised with religion.

A few souls looked at him, a presumed Worker in a Worker's uniform, his hat in his hands, strangely. But it was not unheard of for even a Worker to venture above, and to visit this holy, this sanctimonious keep. In the center of the statues of Mortal Sins, was the image of Time or DEATH: a robed skull with a scythe and a flute made from a human femur. perhaps a real one. Freder shuddered. Where was Maria? Why had she not yet come?

***

Slim sat in the back of Freder's car, waiting. He had got inside after following it, at a discrete distance, with his aero-loft car, which could ride on the streets or in the sky. Quickly ascertaining that Georgy had quite possibly murdered Freder and taken his clothing, he followed him to the Club of the Sons, waiting patiently for the taller, blonde man to emerge. The chauffeur seemingly was oblivious; he knew Slim as an agent of Joh Frederson, and that was enough.

Georgy emerged, finally, obviously intoxicated with the damnable liquor drug they served in that "den of ill-repute." Georgey opened the car door to the surprise of his life.

The gaunt, evil face of Slim cracked a horrific smile, and said "Ah! My good young man, so glad you could join me! Come! Get in, and sit! We have much to discuss!"

And Georgy saw that Slim had a gun trained on him and that he was as capable of killing him as he was at swatting a fly. Georgy knew Slim would not hesitate to shoot and would feel no remorse. He was sober suddenly. He got into the back of the chauffeured limo on wobbly legs.

"So what have you done with Master Freder, hm? Where is he? Is he alive, or did you kill him, take his clothing, and rob his pockets to come to have yourself a night on the town, as I suspect? Please answer truthfully. Your very life depends upon it. I can assure you of that."

Slim placed the barrel of his small gun against Georgy's temple. The young man began to quiver.

"I...I have not done anything to Joh Fredersen's son, Mein Herr. I met him below, at my station in the Worker's City, at one of the machines. He helped me when I was exhausted and said he wanted to help ALL of the Workers. He gave me his clothes, and I gave him my uniform, and then he instructed me to go..."

He suddenly remembered the address of Josaphat crumpled in his pocket. He thrust his hand inside, pulled it out, handing it to Slim.

"Here," he said. "Here is where he wanted me to go. But...I was delayed."

Slim looked over at him, smiling. The smile was not a pleasant one but was totally, completely predatory. It was the smile of a ravening wolf, a wolf among human sheep.

"Driver!" said Slim, suddenly, leaning forward. "Take me to this address."

And he handed the paper to the chauffeur. In a few moments, they were off.

***

The thing crept forward on cat-like feet, its hungry, sly glance that of a ravenous feline. It crept forward sinuously, slinkily, a creeping, wiry evil thing. But, knew Rotwang, a thing of sheer beauty. But a thing of repellent beauty nonetheless, a thing that could drive men mad with desire, make them cut each other's throats with a violent passion. And the gaze was both sly and cunning, and yet, curiously stupid--as of one possessed, by some malignant, if rather mentally deranged spiritual entity.

He knew it to be a thing of cunning monstrosity, a lithe, gorgeous image of DEATH, that would bring disaster in its wake.

He began to shake, to exult. He said, "I have recreated her. My Artifice. My Parody. My Futura..." He looked at her with bleary, bloodshot eyes, his orbs grown wide with madness. He was his booby trap for Joh Fredersen. She was his stick of TNT. She was his atom bomb.

And she wore the face of MARIA.

"Quickly," he called to the dwarf servant. "Fetch the Master of Metropolis! Fetch Joh Fredersen!"

***

Freder walked disconsolately through the open court, passersby staring at this man, this WORKER above ground awkwardly--it was not a common sight to see one of "them" out and walking around in the city proper. He had his hat in his hand and his heart in his gut. Why had she not appeared? Why had she not come to speak with him? In her holiest of holy places, the cathedral? He was uncertain. Had he been too forward? Was she frightened, perhaps, that he was part of a trap being prepared for her by his father? Yes, he surmised, that must be it.

And so, his place in the coming revolution was lost before it even got started. He wanted to almost weep. he felt impotent with rage and despair.

Before him was the house of the "Wizard of the Red Shoes", the old, ugly, even ghastly black wooden dwelling in the center of the court that seemed to contrast so strangely with the tall, gleaming monolithic skyscrapers that glowed with bold, golden electric fire around it. This place seemed to squat in the darkness, to draw cold and loneliness in upon itself. Suddenly--

"Help me! Help me! I am being held prisoner here!"

What was that? Freder thought he could hear a woman screaming in the night, the voice echoing out across the court. He coked his ear. Yes! And, and--he knew that voice!

"Maria?" He called out.

Maria was standing on top of a table, her fingers thrust between the iron grate that looked out from the curve of the ceiling. Below her, laughing, exultant, Rotwang had his black-garmented arms about her waist, pulling her back down, as one might manipulate a naughty child. Ah! he told her. Don't you realize it is of little use?

"I've already won. And you're the one who has helped me bring it about!"

And Maria, who had been out for a little while when Rotwang transferred her image to that of his Parody Artifice Futura, did not quite grasp what he was saying, She had awoken feeling a bit groggy his lab. She had been nude, but he had respectfully brought her a robe, and she knew she had been used in an experiment--not violated in some lewd or criminal manner. She doubted a man such as Rotwang would stoop to rape, at any

rate. He seemed utterly mad but not perverse. But perhaps that feeling was simply in her mind.

What had he used her for? she wondered.

Freder rushed across the court in the dark, coming to the door of the "Red-Shoed Wizard," a place he and his young chums always use to run by in delicious terror as children, sometimes pitching pebbles at the side of the place. The long windows were blackened, eyeless, and gazed out onto the night under the peaked, ancient roof. Freder imagined how damp and musty and moldering the place must smell from within. He approached the front door. Did anyone live here?

As befitting the home of a "Wizard" he saw that the front door was adorned with the pentagram--inverted, the sign of black witchcraft. He listened intently, but the voice of the woman, which he KNEW had been coming from this accursed old place, was now silent. He raised his fist to pound on the door, but before he could bring it back down again, it--flew open. He felt his heart skip a beat, but he was drawn in, suddenly, in fascination.

Slowly he crept inside, into the dark corridor beyond. Beyond, there was a second door, but the front door, which he had left hanging open, suddenly slammed shut. Freder raced back to it, pounded with both fists upon it, knew with a sickening feeling that he was trapped, turned, and decided that he would go through the second door. Beyond, in the darkness, he could see what appeared to be a staircase, winding down, to a basement level. He went forward. First, though, he rooted around until he found what appeared to be a twisted, gnarled piece of old branch. He proped the second door open with this, hoping it would not shut.

His hope was short-lived.

Joh Fredersen marveled at what Rotwang had wrought. "She is magnificent," he said, putting his quivering fingers lightly upon her arms. She looked up at him with that same sly, cat-like gave, her mouth a possessed grin. She looked as if she could swallow him whole.

"I tell you, Rotwang, you are beyond a genius. You are truly beyond brilliant. You are an explorer rather in the furthest reaches of what the mind can attain. You are, quite simply, a wizard, a sorcerer, a maker of magic..."

Frersen continued to go on like this, while Rotwang listened in the shadows, exultant, yes; but also inwardly plotting, planning, laughing in merriment. He said to himself, in the space between his ears: "Yes, Joh Fredersen, praise me, praise my brilliance, Joh Fredersen. We shall see how you react when all is said and done, Joh Fredersen. What will you think of old Rotwang then, Joh Fredersen, when your mighty city lies in ruins? Can you tell me that, Joh Fredersen?"

Meanwhile, the son of Joh Fredersen had pulled back the curtain in Rotwang's laboratory. His eyes bugged in wonder as he beheld the marble monument to his mother, Hel, who, according to Rotwang was "Born to be my love, " but was "Lost to Joh Fredersen." Furthermore, as he already knew, she had, "Died giving birth to his son Freder."

He felt the cold chill of unreason march across his back in prickly cold tendrils of fear. it was as if someone had just walked across the plot of earth destined to be his grave. He let the thick velvet curtain fall back and walked on in the darkness. It was then that he noticed a light in the door, spilling out from beyond,

and two shadows in the darkness, moving. he went forward, approaching with caution.

He came to the half-open entryway. And, to what should his astonishment dd he behold? it was his father, plain and simple. And standing next to him, holding him lovingly, was MARIA.

His Maria. The virginal way shower. The High Priestess. The Cybaline Oracle. But it was not Maria. This was a cold, cat-like female leopard, who might pounce silently upon a man, like a hungry beast, and devour him.

Freder, who had consumed copious amounts of Soma in the past, felt, suddenly, the curious "flashback" effects of the liquor-drug. Or perhaps, it was a combination of that and the pure stunned shock of seeing this demon, this revenant of Hell. (Or was it the real, true Maria finally revealed as an AGENT OF HIS FATHER?)

He felt the room begin to spin, the image of his father and the sly, cat-like, sinister Maria-thing began to whirl, double, trebled, until it spun like a top, and strange geometric forms and curious waves of energy seemed to form a sucking black hole, a void in which he was pulled down, down, down, until he knew only a tunil of whirling spinning, kaleidoscopic colors.

And then--blackness.

***

Josaphat went to the door, and Slim entered.

He was silent a moment. Outside, in the hall, Georgy waited at the door. Looking in, he surmised he was about to witness a killing.

"Traitor," said Slim. "I've come to bring you back to the Master. to face the consequences of your acts."

But, before Slim could barely get the words from his lips, Josaphat was upon him.

The rolled around on the carpet, Josaphat reaching for Slim's pistol-ready hand, and pulling it back behind his back, wrenching the gun from his long, strong fingers.

it clattered to the floor. The force of the impact caused it to discharge, sending a hole through the wall. Josaphat had his hands around Slim's throat. In a few moments, he knew, his life would be choked from him.

Suddenly--

"Stop! Stop, damnit, before you kill him Josaphat!"

Georgy was standing there, holding the gun on both of them. Josaphat released Slim, who had not counted on

the small man being so strong.

"I am a Worker. This is my quarrel. Whatever part Josaphat has played in this affair, it is minor compared to the part played by your Master's own son. Do you think that Freder Fredersen, who will one day be the MAster of MEtropolis, would want this, want you to kill this man, or wish him to kill you? To what end?"

Slim scooted backward, away from Josaphat, gasping. His back to the door. Suddenly, Josaphat stumbled over beside him, turned, and slid down the door. Both enemies, men who had formerly wished to kill each other, sat side-by-side, gasping for air.

Georgy still had the gun trained on him.

Josaphat said, "He's right you know. The Workers are on the verge of revolt. Only the sermons that the young girl, Maria preaches, are what keep them from rising--"

Slim said, "All I know is that you are a traitor, and...I have my orders."

Josaphat turned to him, sudden anger flaring up between gasping breaths, "Think, damn you, think! Stop being such an automaton for Joh Fredersen. What do you think will happen if Georgy's people rise up if they destroy the machines? What do you think will happen to OUR world if they decide to stop producing for us? I tell you: We need a mediator. And Freder is the Mediator! He is the one that Maria has foretold of. He is the heart that must beat between the hands and the mind!"

***

It was not long before Freder was brought back to the manse he shared with his father and their servants. Josaphat and Slim, Georgy, and a hustle and bustle of doctors and nurses and servants delivering trays of food had been in and out. He felt like a man returned from death, with a tale to tell.

***

But the fever, or the Soma, or whatever ailed him, came on him again. Stronger this time, he slipped in and out of consciousness, his mind tormented by strange visions. His doctors and nurses would come in and fuss over him, the maid brought his uneaten tray of food. They worried about him starving as he seemed insensible, often. Finally, after another week, the fever abated somewhat. He saw Josaphat by his bedside. And then, as he went in and out of slumber, the man had disappeared.

Had his father been in at any time to see him? He suspected not. But perhaps the figure he thought he had glimpsed, tall and

lean, but not quite so lean as Slim, was his father. He was not certain.

One day, he reached over to the nightstand for a glass of water, and his fingers fell on a small rectangle of cardboard. He pulled it toward him, and blearily began to read:

> *Tonight at Yoshiwara's! We present to you, the dancing, twirling temptress MARIA! Her name may mislead you, though! For she is no virginal mother, but a wily temptress, riding the Great Golden Beast through the avenues and boulevards of wanton SIN! Come one, come all, come prepared to meet a sight you shall never again see for as long as you live!*

He saw her writhe in fury, a slinky image in a black dress, holding her arms out imploringly. Beneath her, gathered on the dance floor at Yoshiwara's men in tuxedos doffed their hats and ran their gloved hands over quivering lips, as a field of eyes swam out of the darkness upon her. Some pulled smoke from hookahs, some from cigarettes stuffed into the ends of long filters. others swallowed glasses of Chablis, or took Soma, but all were, finally, enraptured, and all attention was upon her.

"But what is this?" one of them exclaimed. "She has disappeared."

There was a general murmur of surprise below, when, suddenly, a brilliant smoking light shined up from the tail dais above. A beautiful crystalline fan, an immense circular thing of rare and wondrous gold and alabaster beauty, rose up over a golden cauldron, revealing the Scarlet Woman, Babylon, the Mother of all Whoredoms and Abominations, riding the Seven-Headed Beast of Revelations. Her arms were splayed out in an

incredible artist's pose of opulence. Suddenly, she came forward, as rare and white as a bird.

Her headdress was an incredible jewel-bedecked arc above her, her body glistening with pearl-white robes. Suddenly, those robes were cast aside, and she stood there nude, resplendent only in gilded rings and streamers of sensual pearls cascading against the comfortable hill of her bosom. She began to dance, as gracefully as a gazelle, amazing the tuxedo throngs of young male admirers below her, a writhing, sensual spirit in the midst of fog emanating from below.

Faces, a sea of eyes upturned, looking toward her, watching her eagerly and with growing intensity of passion. Men began to fight for her attention, at first shuffling and imploring her with vague imprecations of lust, then physically assaulting one another, dueling, going for braces of pistols, fencing swords. Later, men mad with lust for her would put a bullet in their skulls, dripping their life's blood out from ears that no longer heard, and eyes that no longer saw.

On her knees, she writhed, serpentine, a goddess. A temptress; Isis, Bharati, Kali, Lilith. Eve turned to evil. Don't you want her, she seemed to say. She beckoned, Circe calling forth the vilest of pig-like apes, what was worst in men. The Scarlet Whore.

Babylon...

"Don't you want me?"

"Well, don't you?"

Freder writhed in bed, his hands before his face, seeking to block the obscenity swirling in smoke before him. She emerged from the flaming cauldron of light below, writhing in the smoke,

dancing, as lithe as a gazelle, her bejeweled and pearl-encrusted fan-like headdress a quarter moon above her milk-white, painted face.

She rode the beast. The Dragon of Seven Heads. Below her, eyes formed an ocean of visions drinking her up, as men lusted in their hearts deeply, plotting the doom of each other, all become killers now, because of her.

Freder saw the stars and planets swirl around him, drawing him down through a cosmos of terminal doom, and he was falling, falling, and there seemed to be no end.

Act 4: Between the Hands and the Mind

She had raged for hours, whipping them into a frenzy, weaving her witch's spell. Her face was a manic mask of twisting emotion, her eyes wild, as the sensuality of her violent fervor goaded them toward the cataclysmic rage that would erupt as surely as a volcano spewing forth its molten fury.

The waters of the Workers' City had flooded the dim cement hallways and darkened corridors of the machine rooms, sending huge chunks of masonry crumbling and tumbling down. Maria — the true Maria — having escaped from Rotwang's house where she had been held captive, returned to find the entire city on the verge of being drowned. She flew to the giant gong in the city center, in a courtyard between the dark, hideous houses, and climbed atop the lever device that could divert the waters into a life-saving reservoir, just in time to save their lives.

Around her, like little mice, the children gathered as the waters rushed in, growing higher, higher, higher at their feet. Above them, Maria fought with the stubborn lever, straining with all her

might. Soon Freder, who had found his way to the city center, was aiding her with all the strength they both could muster.

Bong—bong—bong went the automated gong, the alarm.

Freder had come from the Chapel where Maria had once held forth, but he knew it had not been she who had delivered the final sermon there. He had come through the underground tunnels beneath the city, Georgy 11811 and Josaphat with him — Freder having recovered from his psychic attack, his reeling world of half-formed hallucinations, brought on in part by his use of Soma.

Maria — or rather, her double — was preaching maniacally. Georgy 11811 had leapt in front of her, as if to block her from view, to shut out the influence of this Satanic impostor. Freder intoned, pointing: "You're not Maria! Maria spoke of peace, not violence!" And it was true.

However, the crowd suddenly roared, "It's him! The Oppressor! The son of Joh Fredersen! We recognize him! And he must die!"

And so they had surged forth, and Georgy had jumped in the way of a man to whom a dagger had been delivered. And Georgy now lay bleeding upon the stone floor, cradled in Freder's arms.

The Maria Impostor, exalted, her mad, manic gaze as she was hefted to the shoulders of the workers, occasionally dissolved into a one-eyed, cat-like look of vulpine, female predation — as if, beneath the skin, the metal priestess of hell was nothing but a hungry animal. Yet her arms extended above her, as if to call down the heavens.

"We must destroy the machines!" cried one man.

And so to the machine rooms they went, a riotous mob, an insurrectionary mass in revolt. But did they know that, in so doing, they would utterly destroy themselves?

Grot had been on the telescreen, reporting to Joh Fredersen of the impending riot.

"The bastards have broken into the Power Station! If they destroy that, the entire Workers' City will flood. All will be destroyed!"

Joh Fredersen felt his icy heart skip a beat.

"Stop them! Stop them, Grot! If you do not stop them, I fear for what may happen to you! Damn you! Do whatever you must, or there will be hell to pay!"

Grot, his immense bulk heaving under the great strain of this looming tragedy, stammered and gasped, feeling his own heart pound with pain. He said, "Yes, Excellency," before ending the communication. The screen went dark.

Joh Fredersen sat heavily at his desk. In time, Slim came in, his eerily tall, lean frame casting a long shadow across the sitting form of the Master of Metropolis.

The workers had run riot through their automated prison, pulling down the bars of their cage — sometimes in the literal sense — smashing the workstations and rendering everything in their wake a devastated ruin. Maria had goaded them onward and upward, ascending to the level of the Power Station, the evil within her mechanized body exulting in the pathway of smoking destruction they left behind.

Grot had appeared then, at the top of a flight of steps. His heaving bulk labored for breath in the murk and gloom, sweat and spittle rolling down his bearded chin. He rolled up his sleeves

and, with a huge wrench in his hand, screamed, "Fools! If you destroy the machines, you will destroy your homes! You will be committing suicide! Do you not understand?"

The throng of rioting workers rushed forward. Grot was quickly pushed aside by the heaving mass. He knew then it was hopeless.

So here they were.

***

"Help me! We must pull back this lever, my dear! I don't have the strength myself!"

Freder pounded up the strange square stone ramp and, lending his hand to Maria, began to strain at the lever. Around them, the waters surged; the children, like rats scampering across the floorboards of a sinking ship, began to gather, clinging to the stone dais upon which Maria and Freder now stood.

***

"Where is my son?" asked Joh Fredersen to Slim.

Slim, never one to show great emotion, said calmly, "In the machine room. In the depths—"

Joh Fredersen fought to process what he had just been told.

"With the workers?"

Slim bent his head in acknowledgment.

Joh Fredersen held his head in his hands. His face stretched into a comic-grotesque mask of tragedy.

He began to pull his hair in frustration. Later, as the machines ground to a halt, as the lights blinked out across the sprawling, sparkling city of Metropolis, upon which he — the Master — had

so often looked with haughty, arrogant eyes, he would weep and curse the name of his dead son.

***

It was the effort of Hercules, but the two of them got the rusted lever pulled, opening the safety valves to forestall the devastation of the entire city — already crumbling under the weight of the killing flood waters, as vast jets blew apart chunks of masonry. Josaphat was leading the children, hand in hand, in a single, long, snake-like procession through an escape tunnel, up stairs and into the Upper World.

Freder and Maria sat side-by-side as the flood waters in the city center — the courtyard of the Workers' Housing — began to abate and even recede. Maria held wet, soaking, shivering, terrified children in her arms.

"Maria! I will tell the workers their children are saved! Meet me in the cathedral when all has ended."

And with that, Freder began to swim back out toward the same egress Josaphat was using to lead the children to safety.

In the machine room, the workers — hand in hand — were exulting in the Satanism of their destruction. Their world was ending apocalyptically. But it would not emancipate them from their slavery and bondage. This they did not know — but Grot, great, burly, bearded, immense Grot, was on hand to tell them.

He stood at the apex of a staircase, leading up into the smoking ruin of a devil-faced former machine—

"You fools! Now you have done it! You have destroyed your lives!"

And then he bent foreward, chastising them, almost comically, as if he were a school mistress.

"But, tell me," he began, "Where are your children?"

The workers dancing, ring-around-the-rosy, suddenly stopped. One of the milling throng suddenly cried out, "Oh, our children?" And then they began to beat their breasts in anguish, smoke and dark, filthy water sloshing around them, as if they were in the pits of a new hell.

***

Above, at Yoshiwara's House of Sin, the tuxedoed sons of privilege partied and danced the night away with their new idol, the Scarlet Woman, imbibing the wine of her adulteries. On their shoulders they carried the resplendent human-animal-feline robot hybrid that had been created by Rotwang, the master wizard that had so recently doffed his ceremonial robes for a tuxedo, to present his most amazing of creations to swarms of young male admirers, who had fought with swords as well as fists for her attention; whose every glance and movement betrayed a hypnotizing, gazelle-like sublimity and grace. Some would take their own lives in desperation for her attention. What magic spells did she weave? It was of no matter now, as the lights began to blink out in Metropolis, as the city and its bright, flashing whoredom closed its legs to the night; as hovering cabs fell from the air, the crowd at Yoshiwara's continued to dance; as, Babylon-like they celebrated their descent into dissolution, and the waiting arms of death.

"Dance, dance, dance, dance!" she exhorted them, quoting the ancient poet who foretold a "season in Hell." This was their season, *her* season. She had brought forth this demon, this machine-faced ogre, this metal Moloch to consume the world. Metropolis would burn.

"Burn, Metropolis! BURN!"

***

Freder and Josaphat led the interminable lines of shivering, soaked but mercifully, still-living children upward and outward, into the streets of the city above. Maria made her way to the cathedral, knowing it was there that her God would meet her, to comfort her, to offer succor in such a time as this, when the lives of the workers had been upended themselves, by their destruction of the hated, accursed machines.

Grot had asked his people, pointedly. "Who convinced yu to do this? I ask you. I know that we, mere workers, are subject to be influenced by any and all that seem to be our superiors, by dint of birth and caste. Well, we are easily controlled. yes? But have the bourgeois above ever goaded us into self-destruction? Huh? No, of course not! They need our hands as much as we need their minds. To that end, they would never do so. But, but one among us has done this. I ask you again: Who?"

There was the briefest pause. Then:

"The witch! She was the one who caused this. Maria is her name!"

"She must die!" Exclaimed one an all.

"Find her! Kill her! Burn the witch!" exclaimed Grot, his bulk heaving, as spittle and sweat rolled down his chin in streams, his eyes were mad with rage.

***

Rotwang had lost his mind. Zombie-like, he emerged from his dark, cavernous home, hearing the strains of a different music, one born from the madness of his mind. He was also, like Hel, now recreated, a robot.

"Coming, my love, my Hel," he whispered to himself. "I'm coming to be with you. Wait for me there, I will not fail..."

He proceeded out the door, his leather gauntleted hands stretched before him. His eyes were the twin, dark pools of religious devotion. Devotion to the pentangle shield of wizards, the fine, linear and angular lines of which had brought him the secrets of power--to imbue a metal machine with life. Life!

"Stay for me there, I will not fail...to meet thee in that hollow vale."

Out the door, and into the night. He would find her. His Artifice Parody Futura. His loving metal woman recreated. His Hel.

***

In the darkened streets of Metropolis, it was inevitable that the two bloodthirsty mobs would meet, clash, and that one would prevail.

The despairing, damned and riotous workers, hellbent on enacting vengeance against the "witch" that had betrayed them, that had led them astray, ran headlong into the frenzied celebrants of Yoshiwara's, the sons of privilege clad in their finery, carrying their paper lanterns, the impostor Maria, the witch, held aloft on their shoulders.

For the workers to take them in the clash was short work. For them to capture this Maria was but the work of a moment.

To drag her to the place of burning, the old-time place where women accused of witchcraft were put to the stake, was also the work of a moment. To heap a great mound of combustible refuse was likewise, short work for the crowd.

A stake was erected. Maria was chained to it.

***

Freder departed, leaving the crowd of children under the care of Josaphat. He heard screams coming from nearby, as he made his way to the cathedral. Before him, even in the gathering darkness of the city, whose electrical functioning was now shut off, he could see the human masses fighting and moving, like a great hungry beast around what, he took in the moonlight, as a massive preparation for a bonfire.

They were in the Court of the Miracles, in front of the Cathedral. What was going on here?

A worker stepped forward, swinging a burning torch 'round and around in his hand. Suddenly, he let it go, and it descended into the massive pile of kindling.

Above, chained to an impromptu wooden stake, the Parody Artfice Futura, the Impostor Maria, writhed in gleeful torment.

"Fools! Fools!," she cried, "You've destroyed your own world. You listened to me, and I spoke with the cooing voice of a dove, and with the throat of a dragon I breathed fire upon you! Curses! I declare curses upon thee, and thy heirs! Die!"

And with that she went up in flames, screaming and laughing, her wild eyes shooting daggers of malediction at the exultant throng below.

Freder looked in horror as Maria burned.

His heart began to die. Then, suddenly--

"Look! The witch! Why, she isn't even human!"

The flesh fell away into ashes, revealing the cold structure of the metal body beneath. Parody Artifice Futura, Rotwang's Hel.

So it had been a false Maria that had caused the uprising, The insurrectionary mob of workers had revealed the metal body beneath the skin, by burning this abomination in the Court of Miracles before the Cathedral, as witches had been burned from time immemorial, from the time of the Wizard of the Red Shoes. Freder felt his heart leap with hope.

He turned. He went into the crowd, and there, unaccountably, suddenly was Grot.

Recognizing the man instantly, he said, "Tell your brothers and sisters, your people, tell them: their children have been saved!"

And Grot's eyes grew wide with astonishment, and he turned, and putting two fingers in his mouth to whistle, shouted, "Your children are alive, you fools! Freder Fredersen has saved them. Do you hear me? The son of Joh Fredersen has saved your children!"

A murmur went up in the crowd as the realization came to them. They broke into exultant cheers, as women fell to joyful weeping. Grot turned back to address Freder, but Freder was already gone.

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In the cathedral, he had come upon her. The old wizard, in a trance-like state, had shined the auraic light of his immense power upon Maria, the true Maria, as she fled from him, quaking among the marble forms. She cowered in the dust as he struggled with her, putting his gloved leather hand upon her neck. Would he strangle her?

Just then, a form flew forward in the darkness. Freder leapt from the shadows to grapple with Rotwang. He began to pound the ancient wizard, and they locked forms, struggling, as Maria,

trapped by both of the combatants, trembled in terror upon the floor.

Rotwang, possessed as if by a demon, threw Freder from him. Bending swiftly, in one motion, he scooped up the fainted Maria, carrying her from the gallery of the cathedral up the hard, marble stairwell, up, up, to the rafters and beyond, to the roof, where grimacing stone gargoyles looked down into the swirling darkness below, sentinels against the evils of the night.

Freder came to just in time to see Rotwang disappear, with Maria thrust over his shoulder, through the doorway that lead to the roof. He jumped up, moving to the stairs in a slow, shambling, but increasingly quick fashion.

He thrust open the door, began to ascend, up, up. He came, in short order, to the door leading out to the roof. Rotwang's bent visage was disappearing up the sloping, precarious side, shingles falling into Freder's face as he pursued him skyward. Below, the fall from this height would bring a dizzying, sickening, and final summation to whoever was unlucky enough to lose his grasp. *What*, Freder asked himself, *does he mean to fling her from his perch*? Freder thought, half-madly, *He is climbing up to meet God!*

Up, up. Now at the top. Freder climbed onward, not daring to look down. He was now walking the tightrope between two sloping sides of he roof. Before him, he realized, Rotwang had released Maria. Freder waited to hear the scream of her fall, but, looking over the side, he could see where she dangled at death's edge, by one. Solitary. Hand.

Freder flew forward. He caught Rotwang in his grasp. They grappled yet again. Then--

A scream. A falling body. Rotwang was falling through empty space to the cobbles below.

As the old wizard looked down, his mind became astonishingly clear. He was being reborn in the Void. He was traversing the womb of death itself. This was not a cause for alarm. This was a triumphan entry of joy.

"Hel," he said. Then spoke never again.

Freder pulled Maria up to him, with his last ounce of strength. Below, Joh Fredersen had arrived with Slim. He was flanked by Josaphat and Grot. Joh Fredersen fell to his knees to look skyward, at his son, his beloved Freder, still alive.

Later, they would gather in the Garden of Earthly Delights, and Grot would extend his hand, as Maria observed for the multitude, "Between the hands that build, and the mind that plans, there must be a mediator. and that must be the heart."

And Freder stood forth, The Mediator, and brought his father's hand into that of Grot, the representative of the workers. And then the tale was told, the thing accomplished, and the curtains fell.

Fin.

Afterword

The slim volume you hold in your hands is the culmination of a long-held vision, or dream. It came to me as a child while standing in front of the local library. I knew then that I would one day write a book about the film *Metropolis,* because the film touched me in a way no other movie I ever had seen up until that time had. It resonated with me because I literally dreamed the images of it before I ever saw a single frame of it.

Falling asleep one night. I had a strange, troubling dream of a machine room, or factory floor. Thin, scarecrow-like workers moved in what seemed like a choreographed fashion, at the controls of a vast apparatus. I had never seen anything like it before, I thought, as the dream unfurled.

It was just then that what seemed a horrible explosion occurred. It was as if a bomb went off in the place. Suddenly the thin, ragged workers were being carried on stretchers in front of a man putting out an arm toward them. The man was dressed in a buttoned shirt with old-fashioned riding pants. I suddenly saw an image of him, or at least his back, running through vastly tall metal double doors. It was exactly the "Moloch" scene from *Metropolis*. But I didn't know that just then.

It was not until later, when an uncle brought a VHS cassette he had taped off of Chicago Public Access to a family get-together, that I realized what my dream had meant. He brought this film for another uncle of mine, who loved the Roaring Twenties. As we all sat down to watch the film he had brought, *Metropolis*, of course, I was astounded slowly to realize that the images on the screen were the *exact same images* from my puzzling dream. I began to get a serious feeling of high weirdness wash over me. What could it mean?

I don't have to tell you I said nothing to anyone there. They wouldn't have understood or believed me. Just a child telling tales, they would think. As for my part, I knew then that *Metropolis* was a film that was very important to me, and that I would be viewing it, again and again, for the rest of my life.

And as a child who associated book writing with the ultimate in achievement, I swore, or at least envisioned, that one day I

would write a book about this great, mysterious, powerful film. And now forty years later, here we are.

It is said Goebbels and Hitler himself were greatly impressed by the film, and wanted director Fritz Lang to head up the cinematic division of their propaganda bureau. Perhaps they didn't realize Lang was Jewish. At any rate, Lang fled Nazi Germany for the United States, leaving behind wife and creative partner Thea Von Harbou, the author of *Metropolis* and, eventually, bizarrely, an ardent Nazi.

Bizarre because *Metropolis* opposes fascism, decries authoritarian callousness, and also revolutionary zeal that is self-destructive. It demonizes technological achievement without restraint, and in the present age of AI, is more relevant than it was a century ago. Now, we have humanoid robots that put Parody Artifice Futura to shame. The occult symbolism of the film, the inclusion of the pentagram, the inverse pentagram used by black magicians, which is above the throne wherein Parody is first seen seated, makes plain the film's connection of the dehumanization of modern technology and mechanization with the Satanic.

But it is a two-way street. The workers destroy their machines, but the destruction nearly destroys them. One cannot exist without the other, it seems to be saying. Far from a revolutionary creed, it seems to be making the case that though class equality is all well and good, there must also be acknowledgement that a utopia based on abolishing distinctions entirely is a futile gesture.

The film can be interpreted in various ways, but it is hard to see anything but a plea for Marxist socialism informing it. No matter. It is complete, a perfect entertainment. Various versions have been released over the years, my personal favorite being

the reconstruction done by Giorgio Moroder, who provided the perfect pop music score.

In closing, let me say *Metropolis* in the end is *Metropolis*, a film that is an undeniable, deathless masterpiece, a legendary tale that evokes both an alternate past, and a hopeful future. We alternate, like the heart itself, between those two, ever-shifting polarities. C'est la vie.

Edison's Frankenstein
Adapted from the 1910 Film

Preface

Charles Ogle was, I think, my first true glimpse of cinematic horror and absurdity. Even if that is not quite true, it still has the ring of truth buried somewhere deep, deep down in its brackish, still-beating heart. His agonized, idiot visage, his long, pointed nails, his hunched and hairy frame; these things all wore the aspect of a medieval peasant, a village idiot from some lost, forgotten fairy tale. His hair, which was a frizzy, wild coif atop his suffering skull-wherein dull, ignorant eyes rested above the misshapen mouth, a mouth from which no one could guess capable articulation could emerge--all added the mien of hideousness, of a legendary ogre to the grotesque embodiment

of long-suffering abandonment; abandoned, because--born of death.

Lengths of rope had been wrapped around his frame. Perhaps this was the remains of the noose from which his criminal's body swung, perhaps at a crossroads. Certainly, it was left there to be picked apart by vultures, so that the eyes could be pecked out in the gloom. Overhead, in a dark, Bavarian sky, clouds gathered about the crown of this singular revenant, this accursed body would be in maggoty rags of brown filth. His legs were covered by thick peasant hosiery; his feet were enormous flapping "Krakow" shoes (medieval pointed-toed shoes), lending an even more absurdly ugly spect to an already hideous form.

He seemed to exude filth and the grave in his wake. Did he climb down from the scaffold and present his flayed-open carcass for Frankenstein's delectation? Hardly. This is not the key point of the plot which we will now examine. The chief thematic element that resonates so strongly with this author, as well as many others, is the defiance of God, and God here is simply a substitute for DAD. It is the rejection of the Father by the Son (Frankenstein wishes to usurp the role of the Heavenly Father and assert himself as a replacement for divine order. He wishes to bestow animation upon the dead. Curiously, he chooses to create for himself a MAN (read into that whatever you wish) and later scuppers the Creature's desire to have a mate by creating a woman out of the "charnel odds and ends" of the freshly dead.

His desire to defeat death is his own Will to Power; it is a self-destructive tightrope stretched over Nietzsche's Abyss, wherein he looks down into the charnel pit of death, of extinction, and defiantly places himself in the chasm between the Will of God and the Ascent of Science. His misshapen progeny, the Monster,

was rejected for him as if it had been cast forth from Eden. Out of the bits and pieces of death, out of sin and human frailty and the everlasting dust from which we return, called forth from the eternal grave, the Monster stumbles through one pathetic misadventure after another, at least in the novel. In the short (miniscule) first silent film adaptation, he is rather more a demon intent on pure revenge. His reflection in the mirror becomes confused with that of Frankenstein himself, who seems to have birthed the macabre dark ages denizen from his tortured consciousness, like Zeus giving birth from his head to Pallas Athena.

The mirror is a device used, in nearly the same way, in the same shot at the same angle, a few years later in *The Student of Prague* (1914), which is a sort of play on the Faust legend. This is thematically correct of course; Frankenstein is simply an adaptation or take-off of Faust. Moralistically, it gives the same message concerning the inadvisability of seeking knowledge at the expense of moral rightness; or, put another way. flying in the face of God is bound to result in an inevitable collision with the Powers That Be. It is damnation Frankenstein toys with; and the demon borne from the pit of his fears and desires comes back, a reflection of his dark and tormented beingness, his adaptation to the Dead; his sepulchral soul.

Here then, is his story. Or, an early adaptation of it. And THIS author's adaptation of THAT.

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Somewhere out of the deep brackish pits of my living soul, I breathed life into death eternal. This was my error; thus was the

weight of my sin that I went down, down to a charnel pit of my destruction and despair.

My name is Frankenstein, and the ages know me well. I left my family, and my home, to pursue college in Ingolstadt. I had long been ridden, as if by a hag in a nightmare, by the spirit of death, which was the spirit of my dear mother, who succumbed to her illness after a life marked by tragic despair. My father rescued her from a sorry fate as an orphan, when her father, who was caught up in a sordid financial scandal that brought him disgrace and despair, ended his life by his own hand. And death, always a raven perched upon the edge of eternal night, looking out from eyes beetling and black, came flying by our fate, our familial curse.

I was hounded, all my life, by the fiery tale of Prometheus, who stole the thunderbolt of Zeus and brought man the secret of Life and Death. Imbuing him, like a leaden doll, with consciousness, Prometheus was cursed to have his heart and liver eaten for eternity, by vultures. He would reconstitute forever, never die, trapped in his living perdition. Such are the inscrutable ways of the gods.

Lightning flashed down out of a midnight sky. And I could SEE, in its crackling, a violent and intense manifestation of nature, the living consciousness of a universe I took as benevolent and whole. Indeed, I was wrong in this, but one can forgive youth for being naive, for dreaming dreams no mortal dared dream, as he cast his vision skyward, toward the circling abyss above.

But it was to the abyss below that I was inevitably drawn.

My "more than cousin" was the dear, sweet Elizabeth Lavenza, who was found in a hovel with her mother lying dead, another orphan rescued by the dint of the sweet grace of my parents,

their charity, and tender souls. God rest them! They did not deserve a son such as I, one who would blacken the memory of my family name with a sin so monstrous and defiant of Providence that the terror of it would cast shadows of awesome gloom across the span of the centuries. My name is a legend now; I am eternally damned.

But, I should explain.

I left for university in Ingolstadt with all the best of intentions. It was with a head full of dreams and a heart full of what I took to be the noblest of intentions that I rode out, after bidding Father and Elizabeth adieu. Of course, I was a foolish, naive young man, a young man whose ideas of life and the possibilities of reanimating same were informed by the puerile, primitive books of alchemists and superstitious philosophers of a medieval past. It was this rubbish that was roundly rejected by my professors when I first arrived, as being unworthy of an enterprising, intelligent, and thoroughly-modern young man intent on entering with seriousness and sincerity upon a medical practice. All of them scorned me, scoffed at my ideas, of my reading of such "antiquated nonsense" as Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus. I soon feared becoming the laughingstock of my school. There was ONE professor, however, Professor Waldman, who was quite different from all the rest.

A dignified, reserved, but thoroughly strange man, he seemed to take my theories seriously.

"One should never be dismissive of knowledge, no matter the source. Some things can be applied to our quest to preserve and plume the mysterious depths to which life evolves. Come, my boy! I have much to teach you!."

And so he did. It was within two years of assiduous toiling in the brackish waters of chemistry, biology, and necrology, that I came, quite as if by accident, upon the secret to creating animation in a being that had been formed, not by an act of God, but by the Divine Will of a single man, a penetrating explorer into the nether regions of human mortality and the possibility of creating from scraps of decay something vital, something precious and pulsating and breathing and ALIVE. Was it a stroke of genius on my part? An accident? The manifestation of my own indomitable WILL? Or, was it simply the just and righteous punishment from God for seeking to usurp the ways by which he accorded destiny, life, and death throughout the universe? I do not know. To this day, I simply do not know.

I was exultant. Night after night, sitting alone in my laboratory, by the flickering, guttering flame of a single candle, I mixed the noxious preparations to bring about my mad, blasphemous dream. The dreary spattering of rain against the window, and the cold draft of air that did little to chill my bones (likewise, there seemed to be no fire that could warm the dark current of malignant, spiritual ice that flowed in my veins) were the only murmuring susurrations of peace to invade the stern, implacable concentration of my devoted, feverous brain. I worked until dawn.

In my laboratory, once I knew beyond any doubt that the capability for creating life lie within my hands, I wasted no time in setting up the boiling vat of chemicals and flesh, of placing the skeletal remains of the cadaver I intended to imbue with a hideous new life, behind the heavy leaden doors which I had installed at great expense. I had rifled the charnel houses and cemeteries looking for such body parts as I found extraordinary;

all the better to create from such stuff a true, living, and breathing Adonis, a New God, an immortal among puny men.

I sank deeply into the rat-infested, stinking maw of death. Indeed, it was fortuitous for me that there was currently a plague raging through Ingolstadt, and that death trundled by, day by day, in the form of a corpse cart, bodies to be buried or burned at the edge of town, outside the city gates. Houses were marked with skull-and-bones and a warning to outsiders: "Here There Be Plague!" But, alas, perhaps the greatest plague of all was the eager student doctor beating the cobbles with his creaking, hell-bound shoes, his crooked fingers stinking of the rot of ages, the funk of cadaverous loves. I sank deeper, deeper into my world of death.

There is a legend of a certain vampire in Transylvania. [Note: That legend, or at the very least, our adaptation of it, is reprinted here] They say a young man doomed to be a vampire once rose from his grave. His casket became his cloak, his grave his horse, and his shroud a white road stretched before him. All night, his sister unknowingly followed him to the house of his grieving mother, who had been up all night cursing the day of his birth.

My mother, were she alive to see the tragedy that unfurled in the wake of my infamy, might very well grieve. Perhaps she is howling now, through the blackness of eternity, weeping forever my sorry name.

I was that Black Rider, alas. I was that revenant returned. I rode the spectral highway of death.

In the center of my leaden doors, which I was careful to bolt tightly, was a little glass. A peephole, so to speak. A hundred years later, when someone named Edison would conceive of telling my story (albeit, in his inimitable way), it would be

through the use of a machine called the "Edison Kinetoscope." The device itself would have as its most salient feature a spyglass or peephole through which the viewer, who was tasked with turning the handle of a crank to make the succession of recorded images "move," would be privy to see a dancing girl, or men retiring after a long day's toil; even a kiss and a sneeze. And, also, a much-abbreviated version of my particular tale.

To resume.

The foul, stinking vat of chemicals began to bubble forth, and the noxious, yeasty and viscous stuff of life began to coalesce and take shape. It covered, like a living jelly, the desiccated skeleton floating within the tank. Flesh began to cover slimy bone, filling it within as the thing rose, lifting one bony arm in creeping animation. Bits of flesh began to fly, like ashes burning in reverse, into the smoke and swirling miasma of gases as the thing slowly, but with quicker vehemence, began to exhibit the first dreadful signs of a pestilential animation.

I could hardly contain the rapturous exultation within. Within, my heart beat like a dream so that I feared I might almost expire from its exertions. The blood coursed through my veins, and my temples throbbed, as my eyes rolled around in my skull, and I clapped my hands madly and howled at the silence that I, yes, I had truly taken the first giant step toward the final defeat of death--upon the creation of a New Life. A New Man. A SUPERMAN.

Yes, yes. I had crossed the abyss and looked deep into that churning pit of death. Before, I had dreams of seeing my beautiful Elizabeth Lavenza, walking the streets of Ingolstadt, in the very bloom of health. Racing toward her, I grasped her in my arms.

I felt her body stiffen and her skin grow coarse. I thought I held the corpse of Mother in my arms.

I threw her from me in disgust. She wore the leaden hue of death, and in the folds of her bridal garments, the grave worms ate her flesh.

In the dream, too, I was in a sitting room. The portraits hanging upon the walls slowly transformed themselves into the very images of the grave, as if they had been posed posthumously for the portraiture artist to preserve for posterity's sake.

A great table before the fire was transformed into the lacquered surface of a coffin. Beyond, in the glowing moonlight streaming through the window, the sash covered the face of a woman I thought to be Elizabeth. She breathed in as if about to speak when suddenly the filmy curtain was sucked deep into her throat, and I realized she had begun to choke. The entire house it seemed suddenly, was a tomb.

I ran across a stark, barren expanse of ground, finding the earth falling away beneath me. Below me, the ground opened up into a monstrous pit, a mass grave, wherein from out the sloping earth that proceeded down into blackness, the rotted forms of the unearthed and reanimated dead grasped for me, with rotted limbs covered by stinking rags. And I was pulled below, into the earth, into the Realm of the Dead.

And I awoke from this fever dream in my bed. The curtain closing me off from the rays of sunlight (I detested them at this point) proved something staring at me, from the moonlight streaming through the windows just beyond.

The thing crept forward, parting the curtain with its long, pointed, filthy fingers; fingers from which the flesh seemed to peel and flake from the taloned bone.

Mrs. Shelley, in her rather romantic and inimitable and perfect novel *Frankenstein, Or, The Modern Prometheus*, wrote:

> *How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavored to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same color as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips.*
>
> *The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this, I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardor that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.*

She of course spoke with poetic license. But, still, the reaction was the same: I reeled in horror from the hulking, fairy tale ogre before me, the wretched thing with the idiot visage, the contorted mouth, and the stupid, shocked, benumbed eyes, betraying no intelligence; only pure, malicious stupidity, that I knew well could turn, like an enraged child, into evil intent. The

head was quite grotesque, a study in misshapen deformity, and the hair was wild coif more appropriate to a storybook witch than a dignified man.

The arms were long and thin, the hands decaying pointed talons, as stated before. The upper torso was prodigious; the waist, alas, too thin. The legs were mere sticks, and the feet were too long for the body by half.

The foul revenant was able, accursed though its new-born condition is, to somehow manage to find for itself ragged garments, covering the thick, coarse red hair that sprouted from its monstrous form. It wore a tattered, filthy burlap shirt, as a jerkin, and cinched by a stout rope around the waist. Crossing the shoulder was another length of rope. The hands. But, great God, how can I describe the hands?

They were filthy claws, the flesh and hair seeming to have been melted together with grime and grease and flakes of dead skin. The nails were long and exceedingly filthy. I almost imagined his hands as monstrous gauntlets that had been left to rot and decay upon the long, skinny bones.

The arms seemed covered by filthy strips of cloth. The legs were covered by a hose. The monstrous, abnormally long feet were clad in "Krakow" shows, medieval, pointed-toed shoes that lent the image of the thing even more monstrously grotesque.

The pallor of the skin was exceedingly white; the brows met in two arches over the bridge of the nose. The eyes were dull, stupid pits, and the mouth a rictus of twisted pain.

I had stood exultant in my laboratory before the operation, my sacred laboratory with its display of skulls, spinal columns, odd and perverted masks of exceptional human faces; strange and

distorted sculptures of the body. By the light of a guttering flame, I had taken quill in hand, writing to my Elizabeth:

> *"Sweetheart! Tonight I shall accomplish my ambition, the Great Work which will make my name famous, and cause the memory of me to live beyond the ages. I have discovered the secret of life and death, and in a few hours, I shall create into life the most perfect human being the world has yet known. When this marvelous work is accomplished I shall return to claim you for my bride. Your Devoted, F*

And now I wished to rip to pieces that accursed letter of vanity and evil which I had penned! Oh, the thing that I had created was no "marvel", but a monstrous, hideous thing, a thing born from the evil, I thought, that must surely lurk within my very being.

Was I then a man cursed from birth, to enact evil upon the world? What, otherwise, could be the reason for my being? Cold a man who had fathered such a vile creation rest, upon death, in the bosom of the Almighty? Would he not, instead, be cast away, into the Outer Veil, into utter darkness, to suffer the torments and depredations of the Eternal Damned. Was, as Milton intoned, it better, "to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven"?

Overcome with such thoughts, I found myself growing faint, until I fell across the floor, in a deep swoon, and only later did my manservant, Henry Clerval, manage to rouse me. I awoke, peering in terror and fear into the darkest shadows of the room. My Creature, however, was gone.

I returned home shortly thereafter, greeting father and Elizabeth in the parlor by the glass doors leading into the garden. I told them exultantly of all that I had seen, and done, yet...I

never told them of my Creature, although, based on the missive I sent Elizabeth, she must well have wondered.

It was a few days later, while busily planning our wedding night, that Elizabeth came into the study, very gaily, and taking a book of poetry into her hand, exclaimed what an old romantic bore I had become, in light of our impending nuptials, and "Oh, dear, you look pallid! And you're chilled to the bone! You must allow me to make some tea, and we'll have refreshment together!"

And rising from my lap, Elizabeth took the tea kettle and went into the next room, where the stove burned warmly. I reclined once again, looking deeply and unfathomably into the mirror. My eyes peeled away from their sockets when, in the depths of the mirror, coming through the door, I beheld the horrid wretch to which my blighted mind and evil fingers had given birth.

The hideous phantom, like some ogre from a fairy story, came slowly through the door, filling the doorway with his immense, hairy, filthy frame, and exclaiming, "So! I find you here, Frankenstein! Warm and comfortable and far, far removed from this cursed form into which you have breathed the hellish fire of animation!"

Speechless, struck dumb with terror, I rose from my chair, thrusting my horrified, quivering arms out in front of me, and exclaiming, "How on earth did you find me?"

The thing before me cracked a lopsided, horrific grin, and began.

"I wandered a confused and benumbed child And why should I not feel as if I had been brought into the world just to be orphaned? Had not my father rejected me? I came to a village;

but, my ugliness and the stink of death that follows me caused the peasants to drive me into the forest, following me with their torches. They would have killed me, but I hid in a hog shed and escaped their fury and hate. The shed abutted a small cottage, wherein an old man and his son lived with his fiance. She was the daughter of a foreign diplomat, a man who had been accused of wrongdoing. The son's father had helped free him from prison, but he betrayed them all and took his daughter back home to Arabia. She finally escaped, and all of them went into hiding in a forest cottage, along with his sister. And so, as he taught her English, from the Bible, and Paradise Lost, I slowly began to learn as well.

"Now as luck would have it, I was wearing an old coat that I had stolen from the lab when you created me. It must have formerly belonged to somebody that you had rifled from the tomb, but, inside the pocket, lo and behold! What should I find but the crumpled page you had written on and cast aside, detailing your experiments, and how you created me, it even gave me a name to think about, the name of FRANKENSTEIN. Thou name most poisonous and hated, like a dagger thrust into the ribs! I swore vengeance against thee for making me, molding me from the charnel, rotting limbs of the dead. "Did I solicit thee, oh my maker, from darkness to promote me? as Milton might say!

"And so I searched for the high and low, after being driven from the only home I had ever known by the surprised return of the son and his fiance, when I was bent at the knees of the old, blind man, beseeching his kindness for a poor stranger. I burned down that cursed cottage later, and began an orgy of destruction, setting fires throughout the land, and being chased by stone-throwing villagers into the hills, and the mountains. Into the wild,

lost places, where I had to learn to survive. Finally, one day, I came upon that brat, William. The one they accused Justine Moritz of, of killing! Yes! It was not Justine who did it, as you were surprised, but I! I was the murderer! I held the boy's throat in my hateful clutches and endeavored to strangle the life from his bones. In a short time, the thing was accomplished. I quickly stole the engraved locket and planted, as incriminating evidence, upon the sleeping form of the unfortunate Justine. As you will recall, the mob took her from her prison cell and gave her a good and proper lynching. The pain this caused you and Elizabeth only served to fill me with glee! But I was not finished yet.

"I came to you and demanded you make me a mate, a companion. A woman. A Bride for the Monster! Eh? And so you went to an isle in the Orkneys and began your work. In a little cabin laboratory on a lost island in the sea! But, wait! The consciousness of God must have gotten to you, for you abandoned this project, and rowed out to the middle of the sea, casting the remains of the cadaverous, unliving thing into the ocean depths. But, unknown to you, MY eyes were peering at you from the darkness, watching you, like a veritable Satan, watching you dishonor yourself and go back on your word. It was then, and only then, that I decided to kill your friend, Henry Clerval. A crime YOU nearly paid for with your life!

"So much tragedy. So much agony. So much grief and pain. And all because of you! Of what you brought into the world, all the grief and pain! Because you were not satisfied to be a man but had to become a god, a thing with mastery over life, and death! Well, m'lord, how are you enjoying your omnipotence? Have enough lives been sacrificed in the balance? Have you not felt the tortured anguish of one you brought to life, from the rotten, moldering entrails and cracked bones of the foul and

putrescent dead, scream at you from the brackish pits of a Hell he can never escape, because, because, like Milton's Satan, a dead thing can never....find salvation. So I descend to the Hell below, a refugee from Heaven eternal. But, but, YOU! What of you, Frankenstein?"

And the monstrous thing turned, looking at itself in the polished laboratory mirror. It put out its arms, imploring some being on the other side of that mirror, and, I at its back, and its face contorted into some shock of genuine, child-like surprise; and, in a moment, the hideous visage was gone, and all that was left in its place was my image.

For, you see, it was a thing born from my sin, from the darkness that lurked within me; the shadow-self" of all our most dreadful imaginings and desires. But I had exorcised them, expiated my guilt, and now, in the arms of my sweet Elizabeth, I could find solace; I could find peace. And the darkness born from my brain would trouble me nevermore.

The End?

Afterword

The story of *Frankenstein* is as near and dear to me as my flesh, as my fractured relationship with my father, my Creator, and myself. I identify with the creature in his loathsome desire to enact vengeance against a man who brought him into this world of pain, only to abandon him; and I can relate to his howl of existential despair at being born a thing blasphemous, beyond the reach of salvation; accursed. No savior bled for a thing stitched-together from old, reeking cadavers, and brought to life by a scientist. Mary Shelley asked the question in 1818 we are still debating today: when does life begin? What is the animation of the body and the consciousness of the same, and how are they interrelated? Is it the will of a Divine Creator, or have we dispensed with him? As Nietzsche might quip, "God is dead." In the wake of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, the Sexual Revolution, the emergence of cloning, walking on the surface of the Moon, and the worldwide technological revolution brought about by the development of the Internet, some might very well ask: isn't God passe? Where is He hiding these days?

It's a flip, blasphemous question, but it rings true.

Man plays God every day. Does a lightning bolt come down upon his crown? Not immediately, but the wings are often plucked off of his greatest designs, his achievements become the dross of history, and he is forced to start again, picking himself up as he anxiously awaits the inevitable day when his technology of killing will render ALL life on this planet extinct.

In the light of that coming apocalypse, does the story of Frankenstein seem so monstrously far-fetched? Who then here is more hideous? The creature? Or the Doctor?

YOU decide.

Cult Films and Midnight Movies: From High Art to Low Trash, Vol. 1

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